Moshe Bar Kepha's Cause of the Celebration of the Nativity

Texts from Christian Late Antiquity

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Moshe Bar Kepha's Cause of the Celebration of the Nativity

A Genre for Exegesis, Ecumenism, and Apology

Edited and Translated

with an Introduction by

Abdul-Massih Saadi

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This publication was made possible with the great,
generous gift of encouragement and love of
my mother,

Evelyn Sabbagh

I dedicate this publication to her as a foretaste
of the fruitful works to come
on the occasion of her eighty-eight
living-loving years

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGLA

CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
PdO	Parole de l'Orient
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PETSE	Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile

[ ]	words in square brackets have been added to the Syriac text from the margin, or represent my reading of defective words.
( )	words or numbers in parenthesis were added to the translation for clarification.

INTRODUCTION

The Cause of the Celebration (ʿ*eltā*, ܥܠܬܐ) (hereafter, Cause) of the Nativity, written by Moshe Bar Kepha (d. 903), is one of his collection of Causes of Celebrations (ʿ*ellātā*, ܥܠܠܬܐ) that survives in a single manuscript in the British Library, MS. 721, Add. 17188 (hereafter, BL Add 17188), dated to the tenth or early eleventh century.[1] This collection is entitled "The Book of the Causes of the Feasts, written by Moshe Bar Kepha, Bishop of Beth Remman[2] and Beth Arabaye.[3]"[4] Despite their utmost importance and unique status in Syriac exegetical literature, these Causes have remained unpublished to date. The present volume provides an edition of the Cause, in which I will highlight Moshe Bar Kepha's creativity in recasting and contextualizing information of the past centuries into a new context that speaks directly to the urgent matters of his Christian communities in the 9th century Abbasid Empire.

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[1] W. William, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum, Acquired since the Year 1838* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1871), 620–622.

[2] Beth Remman is also known as Baremman; it was a town by the Tigris River, northeast of Mosul, Iraq; now it is in ruins. See Ignatius Aphram Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls: A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, Translated by Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 552.

[3] Beth ʿArbaye was an ecclesiastical province that includes Beth Zabdai northward, Balad southward, and Nisibis. Cf. A. Harrak, "Beth ʿArbaye," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage,* edited by S. Brock, and al., (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 71.

[4] BL Add 17188, fol. 1v reads: ܡܠܦܢܐ ܕܥܠܬܐ ܕܥܠܠܬܐ. ܕܡܪܝ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܪܡܢ ܘܒܝܬ ܐܪܒܝܐ.

The genre of Causes is credited to East Syriac (also known as Nestorian,[5] or the Church of the East) writers from the beginning of the sixth century[6] and was revived and introduced to the West Syriac literature of exegesis by the ninth century West Syriac (also known as Miaphysite,[7] or the Syrian Orthodox Church) writer Moshe Bar Kepha. Moshe Bar Kepha is credited as the creative link between the early Syriac literature and his generation and posterity.[8] Until the fifth century, Syriac writers expressed their spirituality, commentary, and doctrinal teaching through writing poetry and discourses (*mi'mre*, ܡܐܡܪܐ), doctrinal hymns (*madrāše*, ܡܕܪܫܐ), homilies (*túrgāme*, ܬܘܪܓܡܐ), demonstrations (*taḥwyātā*, ܬܚܘܝܬܐ) and exegesis, in addition to direct translation of Greek and Hebrew literature into Syriac.[9] The genre of Causes,[10] however, was introduced to West Syriac literature by East Syriac writers from the sixth century on by Moshe Bar Kepha.

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[5] S. Brock, "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 78.3 (1996): 23–35.

[6] E. Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Semitica Upsaliensia 11 (Uppsala and Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988), 136; see also A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*, CSCO 266, Subs. 26 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1965), 128.

[7] S. Brock, "Miaphysite, Not Monophysite!," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 37.1 (2016): 45–54.

[8] A. Vööbus, *Discovery of the Exegetical Works of Moshe bar Kepha: The Unearthing of Very Important Sources for the Exegesis and History of the New Testament Text in the Version of the Vestus Syra*, PETSE, 25 (Stockholm: Cultura, 1973), 11–13.

[9] For a good formative summary on the early Syriac Literature see S. Brock, "Syriac Literature: A Crossroads of Cultures," *PdO* 31 (2006): 17–35.

[10] On the origin of the genre of the Causes see G. Reinink, "The Cause of the Commemoration of Mary: Author, Date, and Christology," in *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*, ed. G. Kiraz, Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 3 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 519–20.

EDITING THE TEXT & TRANSLATION

The text of the *Nativity* in the manuscript is fairly readable despite many holes and much water damage in some of its folios. It consists of six complete folios. The lines in the folios vary from 28 to 30; all written in black ink. Some of the chapter titles are written in thicker black ink, most likely added by a later scribe. The later scribe also provided helpful marginal guides, listing the number of the chapters and notes to be considered as part of the text.

I have followed a precise method for editing the Syriac text. Certain words do not fit well in the context unless their spelling is emended. For such words, I have included the correct spelling in the text and place the defective word in the footnotes.[11] Other words appear in an archaic spelling – these are kept in the text, and I refer to their standard spelling in the footnotes.[12] When words are obscure or defective, I provide my best reading by placing them in square brackets [ ]. I have also used square brackets to include the title of the chapter, which was not used as the title in the Syriac text. Punctuation marks have been kept as they appear in the manuscript, with no attempt at any adjustment or any comment in the footnotes. Finally, I have added paragraph divisions, based on meaning.

The translation of the Syriac text is intended to be fairly literal, aiming at a faithful rendition of the original text, but not at the expense of clarity to the English reader. Particular attention is paid to the contextual meanings of phrases, idioms, and words, rather than slavish or wooden renderings. The footnotes supply alternative renditions for certain words or phrases, where the I felt it helpful to convey a fuller breadth of possible meaning than a single rendering can convey. The footnotes also give variant readings.

In the Syriac text, two symbols are used for clarity. Square brackets [ ] are used for the translation of the Syriac words in square brackets. Likewise, parentheses ( ) are used to include the numbers of the

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[11] For example, as shown in the illustration of fol. 10r, the scribe intended to write "The First Chapter." Mistakenly, he wrote ܩܕܡܝܐ ܦܪܩܐ instead of ܩܕܡܝܐ ܦܪܩܐ.

[12] For example, fol. 10v reads ܚܕܝܢ ܡܬܩܪܝܢ, while the standard writing of the verb in 3fpl. in the perfect tense is ܚܕܝܢ.

paragraphs, the number of the folios, and the biblical references. In the translation, parentheses are also used to add word or words to clarify the intended meaning in the Syriac text.

The punctuation of the translation employs the modern English system; much punctuation is added, which reflects the editor's own reading of the Syriac text. For the most part, there was no way to correspond the punctuation in the Syriac text to English translation.

MOSHE BAR KEPHA

Moshe Bar Kepha was born in 813 AD near modern day Mosul, Iraq, to a learned family which was reputed for its intellectual creativity. At an early age, he joined the monastery of Mar Sergius, an intellectual center of education in the eighth and ninth century.[13] There, he was educated in the monastery's curriculum with the guidance of its faculty. From this monastery, Moshe Bar Kepha started his scholarly career and ecclesiastical ministry as a monk and as the bishop of a large diocese in Mosul for around seventy years until his death on 12 February, 903 AD.[14]

Throughout his long period of ministry, Moshe Bar Kepha, as a churchman, exegete and apologist, lived in the troubled center of the Abbasid Empire, witnessing the consequences of its policies upon the Christian communities. The most daring policy was the Islamization policy of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 861), who severely oppressed Muʿtazilites,[15] Christians, and other religious groups.[16]

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[13] See Ignatius Aphram Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls: A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, translated by Matti Moosa (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 552–566.

[14] For a detailed biography of Moshe Bar Kepha, based on tenth and thirteenth century *Vita*, see J. Reller, *Mose bar Kepha und seine Paulinenauslegung, nebst Edition und Übersetzung des Kommentars zum Römerbrief*, Göttinger Orientforschungen, I. Reihe: Syriaca 35 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1994), 362–364, 21–33. For brief introduction, see J. F. Coakley, "Mushe bar Kipho," in S. Brock, et al., ed., *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 300.

[15] Unlike his predecessors, al-Mutawakkil sided with the traditionalist Muslim thinkers over against the Muʿtazilites, known as "the free thinkers," or "the people of [the divine] justice and unity," أهل العدل

In addition to paying the *Jizyah* tax, this caliph further humiliated the Christians by imposing on them harsher rules which came to be known as the "Pact of Umar."[17]

Alongside his ministerial work, Moshe Bar Kepha was a prolific writer. His writings reflect distinct aspects of West Syriac theology, ecumenism and apology for the Christian faith in the ninth century. His literary legacy is considered of particular importance, as a chain that links the earlier exegetical tradition, beginning with Ephrem (d. 373), and probably earlier,[18] with the classical period of Syriac writings of the sixth to ninth century and with the "Renaissance Period,"

والتوحيد. See F. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1985), 198–206.

[16] D. Thomas, ed., *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity, Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Incarnation"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9.

[17] One of those conditions says: "If any of you says of the Prophet, of God's book or his religion what is unfitting, he is debarred from the protection of God, the Commander of the Faithful, and all Muslims; the security on which was given is annulled." See A. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of ʿUmar* (London and New York, Routlege: 2008), 12.

[18] The sixth century Barḥadbšabba, bishop of Ḥulwan, stated: "Up to date, it (what is Barḥadbšabba referring to) was interpreted from the traditions of Mar Ephrem; these, as they say, were transmitted from Addai the Apostle." ܐܠܐ ܕܡܢܗܘܢ ܕܡܬܬܡܪܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܡܬܬܡܪܝܢ ܡܢ ܐܒܝ ܡܪܝܡ ܬܠܡܝܕܐ ܕܥܕܬܐ. See A. Scher, ed., *Mar Barhadbšabba ʿArbaya, évêque de Halwan (VIe siècle), Cause de la fondation des écoles*, PO 4.4 [18] (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1908) 382 [68]. See an English translation of the entire Cause by A. Becker, "Barḥadbeshabbā, *The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*: Translation and Notes," in *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*, Translated Texts for Historians 50 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 94−160. See the comments of L. van Rompay, "The Christian Syriac Tradition of Interpretation," in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Interpretation. Vol. I: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300). Part 1: Antiquity* ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 632–633. Concerning the identity of Barḥadbšabba of Ḥulwan in relation to Barḥadbšabba ʿArabaya see A. Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*, Translated Texts for Historians 50 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 11–16.

represented in particular by Dionysius Bar Salibi and Bar Hebraeus (12th–13th century).[19] Although most of his surviving works are generally exegetical in nature, as is the Cause under examination here, the apologetic theme for Christian faith always appears in two ways: first, presenting Christian teaching that is commonly accepted by all Christian denominations; and, second, defending the Christian faith against Muslim objections.[20]

THE STYLE OF THE CAUSE

Each Cause includes three standard parts.[21] First, the author provides an introduction stating the contents of chapters of the Cause formulated in questions. Second, often in a catechetical style, the author responds to each question in theological detail, explaining the reason why the Church celebrates this particular feast each year, and the theological significance behind it. Finally, the author concludes the Cause with an exhortation on virtuous lessons learned from its topic.

Moshe Bar Kepha, in his turn, followed this traditional outline loosely. He wrote one lengthy introduction for the entire collection of Causes, promising to list the chapters of each Cause for common benefit. He then offers, "I will investigate each chapter according to my ability."[22] Furthermore, by way of conclusion,

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[19] A. Vööbus, *Discovery of the Exegetical Works of Moshe bar Kepha: The Unearthing of Very Important Sources for the Exegesis and History of the New Testament Text in the Version of the Vestus Syra*, PETSE, 25 (Stockholm: Cultura, 1973), 11–13.

[20] Directly and exclusively, Moshe Bar Kepha wrote one apology for the Christian belief on Free Will, see S. Griffith, "Free Will in Christian Kalâm: Moshe bar Kepha Against the Teachings of the Muslims," *Le Muséon* 100:1–2 (1987): 143–159. See also my article "Ninth Century Syriac Exegete and Apologist: Ninth Century Syriac Exegete and Apologist: Moshe Bar Kepha's Commentary on Luke," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 20.1 (2017): 231–256.

[21] T. Hainthaler, "Thomas of Edessa, Causa de Nativitate: Some Considerations," *PdO* 31 (2006): 66.

[22] BL Add 17188, fol. 3r (and cf. 2v) reads: ܡܚܫܝܢܐ ܚܕܐ ܡܢ ܡܢ ܫܢܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܗܢܐ ܐܡܪܝܢܐ

Moshe Bar Kepha he states, "We will articulate and conclude the Cause with a relevant exhortation."[23]

THE SOURCES OF MOSHE BAR KEPHA'S *CAUSE*

At the outset, Moshe Bar Kepha clarifies that the source of these Causes is not his own invention, but rather the Scriptures and the writings of the divine fathers. He speaks about his "beloved ones," who urged him for an explanation saying: "Since those who wrote these Causes wrote them in eloquent language that is beyond our level of understanding, and they are lengthy and deep. But we want you to write them in a brief way and show them to us in a simple way, even if you cannot demonstrate perfectly what has been said by them in depth."[24] According to Moshe Bar Kepha, he only positively yields to the urgent request of his "beloved ones and the lovers of the divine knowledge," promising them "to put in writing for you the Causes of the Holy Feasts of Christ, which are celebrated every year in the holy church."[25] These Causes, Moshe Bar Kepha continues, are already written by skillful and divine people, who spoke through the Holy Spirit.[26] Moshe Bar Kepha clarifies to his "beloved ones" that, in the process of writing the Causes in a brief and simple way, he will omit some of the text and modify others so that the writing will be of benefit for all learners since no contradiction will be found in it.[27] In fact, Moshe Bar Kepha does not mere-

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[23] BL Add 17188, fol. 3r reads: ܚܕܝܬܐ ܘܡܢܝܢܐܝܬ ܘܟܬܒܐ: ܡܟܬܒܝܢ ܕܡܬܟܬܒܝܢ

[24] BL Add 17188, fol. 1v–2r reads:
ܡܫܟܚܐ ܘܦܫܩ ܕܐܝܟܐ ܚܝܠܐ ܗܘܝܢ: ܚܟܝܡܐ ܡܢܝܢܐ ܕܟܬܒܘܗܝ ܕܟܬܒܘܗܝ ܕܝܠܢ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܠܐ: ܐܝܟܐ ܕܝ ܕܐܢܫܘܬܐ ܡܫܟܚܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ: ܐܝܟ ܕܝ ܟܬܒܘܬܐ ܕܝ ܩܠܐ ܘܒܟܝܡ ܢܦܩ ܐܝܟ: ܡܨܦܐܠܗ ܢܬܐ ܟܝ. ܐܦܝ ܟܝ ܡܨܦܚܝܠܗ ܡܨܦܩ ܐܝܟ ܟܬܝܒܘܬܗ ܕܟܬܒܐܢ: ܗܘ ܡܐ ܘܡܢ ܡܢܨܦܘܬܐ ܐܝܬܘܟܝ.

[25] BL Add 17188, fol. 1r reads:
ܢܨܚܬܐ ܚܢ ܚܢܢ...ܗܘܝܢܐ ܘܬܘܟܦܐ ܐܟܗܢܐ: ܘܢܟܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ ܕܡܨܢܐ: ܡܟܝ ܕܚܦܝ ܗܢܐ ܡܨܦܚܝܢܐ ܒܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ: ܚܝܝܬܐ ܐܘܨܦܝ ܚܦܝ.

[26] BL Add 17188, fol. 1r reads:
ܡܟܝ ܘܚܝܝܐ ܘܨܦܝ ܕܐܟܗ ܟܝ ܢܟܐ ܘܟܐ ܡܟܝ: ܐܢܦܐ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܐܟܬܐ: ܕܚܝ ܕܘܢܐ ܩܝܡܐ ܡܟܝ.

[27] BL Add 17188, fol. 2r reads:

ly omit, modify, and summarize, but also adds his own and supplements his writings from his early works with their rich sources, such as his *Commentary on Luke*.[28] The language of Moshe Bar Kepha is heavily loaded with expressions and types drawn from the liturgical and common prayers of the Syrian Orthodox Church; additionally, Moshe Bar Kepha lived and was trained at a Syrian Orthodox monastery, where the memorizing of Psalms and other part of Scriptures, Ephrem's writings, Jacob of Sarug's writings, and others, was essential to their curriculum.[29] In most monasteries, learning philosophy was part of their curriculum, as is evident in the writings of Moshe Bar Kepha,[30] including his brief philosophical argument in this Cause in chapter 8. He therefore had to hand a wide variety of sources to draw upon for any relevant subject.

MOSHE BAR KEPHA AS A LINK TO EARLIER LITERATURE

As a link between the earlier Syriac literature and his time, Moshe Bar Kepha modeled the genre of the Causes, initiated by East Syriac writers, by using their writings as his main sources. His collection, preserved in the British Library manuscript, contains twenty Causes. Thirteen of them directly correspond to titles and contents

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ܗܘܝܢ ܠܐ ܡܥܨܝܢ ܒܐܝܟܢܐܝܬ ܐܢܫܐ: ܟܕ ܠܐ ܡܫܬܟܚܢ ܡܢܗܘܢ. ܡܢ ܐܝܢ ܕܗܘ ܒܡܫܬܟܚܐ: ܡܬܐܡܪܝܢ ܗܘܝܢ ܟܬܝܒܬܐ. ܟܕ ܟܝ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܒܟܬܒܬܐ ܡܥܡܪܢ ܡܢ.

[28] In his Commentary on Luke, for instance, Moshe Bar Kepha named thirteen earlier authors from fourth century on. See A. Saadi, ed. and trans., *Moshe Bar Kepha's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, in press. See especially, Moshe Bar Kepha's Sources.

[29] For thoughtful and insightful discussion on the curriculum in the School of Nisibis and in other Syriac monasteries, see A. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), esp. 87–97.

[30] See the writing of Moshe Bar Kepha on the opinions of many non-Christians and Christian philosophers on the soul. Bulos Behnam, *The Philosopher and Theologian, St. Severus Moshe Bar Kepha, the Bishop of Barman and Mosul: A Treatise in the Philosophy of the Soul and its Connection with Theology* [in Arabic] *Lesan al-Mashriq*. (Mosul: n.p., 1951).

of the thirteen surviving East Syriac Causes found in a manuscript, Siirt 82, dated to the sixteenth century, from which other copies were recently made.[31] Given the dependence of Moshe Bar Kepha's *Cause of Nativity* on Thomas of Edessa's *Cause of Nativity* and the degree to which Thomas's arguments and ideas were adapted, we can expect to see a similar degree of adaptation in all available thirteen extant Causes by East Syriac authors. It is also very possible that the remaining seven Causes of Moshe Bar Kepha compensate for some of the arguments and ideas in the lost East Syriac Causes.[32] For instance, ʿAbdishoʿ of Nisibis (d. 1318), in his *Metrical Catalogue of Syriac Writers*, composed in 1298, mentioned that Henana of Adiabene (d. 610) composed Causes on Palm Sunday, and on the Discovery (of the Cross).[33] These two Causes of Henana have not survived;[34] however, these two titles do exist among the collection of Moshe Bar Kepha's Causes. In his article on this subject, J. Coakley proved that Moshe Bar Kepha used

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[31] W. Macomber, *Six Explanations of the Liturgical Feasts by Cyrus of Edessa, an East Syrian Theologian of the Mid Sixth Century*. CSCO 356, Syr. 156 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1974) III.

[32] J. Coakley agrees with Baumstark that Moshe Bar Kepha adapted the East Syriac Explanations (Causes) and made it his own addition. See J. Coakley, "The Explanations of the Feasts of Moše bar Kepha," in *IV Symposium Syriacum, 1984: Literary Genres in Syriac Literature (Groningen – Oosterhesselen 10–12 September)*, edited by H. Drijvers, and R. Lavenant, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 229 (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 403-410. Cf. A. Baumstark, "Die nestorianischen Schriften "de causis festorum," *Oriens Christianus* 1 (1901): 320.

[33] J. Assemani, ed. *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino–Vaticana, in qua manuscriptos codices syriacos, arabicos, persicos, turcicos, hebraicos, samaritanos, armenicos, æthiopicos, Graecos, ægyptiacos, ibericos & malabaricos*. Vol. 3 (Roma: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1725), 83–84. Concerning the rest of 6th–8th century Causes that mentioned by ʿAbdishoʿ which have not survived today, Cf. pages 103, 148, 167, 169, 170, 172, 215, 229.

[34] Henana (d. ca. 610) was the director of the School of Nisibis in the late sixth and early seventh century. Cf. J. Childers, "Ḥenana," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. S. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 194.

these two as a model and main source for his own Causes.[35] We can therefore garner some idea of the material in the lost Causes of Henana from the writing of Moshe Bar Kepha.[36]

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS

Moshe Bar Kepha frequently makes use of biblical quotations in his Cause. Most of the text is based on biblical stories, biblical motifs, and prophecy. He makes fifty direct references to the Old and New Testament. Twenty-seven quotations, that is, almost half of them, are not from the Peshitta version. Of the quotations from the Peshitta (twenty-three times to be precise), fifteen are from the Gospel of John. There are only eight non-Johannine Peshitta quotations. It is also noteworthy that when Moshe Bar Kepha closely draws on his main source, Thomas of Edessa,[37] he adjusts Thomas' quotation from the Peshitta into different wording ranging from simple to major differences.

None of these differences exactly matches with the other known versions that I consulted, such as the Harklean, the Old Syriac, in both earlier[38] and recent editions.[39] We might simply

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[35] J. Coakley, "The Explanations of the Feasts of Moše bar Kepha," 409–410.

[36] J. Coakley, "Mushe Bar Kepha and a Lost Treatise of Henana on Palm Sunday," *Le Muséon* 120:3–4 (2007): 301–325, esp. 325.

[37] S. Carr, ed., *Thomae Edesseni Tractatus de Nativitate Domini Nostri Christi* (Roma: Typis R. Academiae Lynceorum, 1898).

[38] Earlier editions: J. White, ed., *Sacrorum Evangeliorum Versio Syriaca Philoxeniana ex codd. mss. Ridleianis in bibl. coll. Nov. Oxon. Repositis nunc primum edita: Cum Interpretatione et Annotationibus*, Vol. 1, (Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1778); R. Bensly, J. Harris, F. Burkitt, A. Lewis, eds., *The Four Gospels in Syriac: Transcribed from the Sinaitic Palimpsest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894); W. Cureton, ed. and trans., *Remains of a Very Ancient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac* (London: John Murray, 1858); A. S. Lewis, ed., *The Old Syriac Gospels or Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910); A. Lewis, M. Gibson, eds., *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels, Re-edited From Two Sinai Mss. And From P. De Lagarde's Edition of the "Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum"* (London: Kegan Paul, 1899).

suppose that the variations are paraphrases of the Peshitta or Harklean, but all quotations from John follow the Peshitta precisely. This observation also recalls the conjecture of R. Aytoun, who wrote a century ago, suspecting that Moshe Bar Kepha used a Syriac biblical version that antedates the Peshitta.[40] The issue will surely only be solved through extensive examination of all the quotations in all his writings, but especially in this collection of the Causes.

MOSHE BAR KEPHA'S CAUSE AND THOMAS OF EDESSA'S CAUSE

Comparison of Moshe Bar Kepha's *Cause* of the Nativity with Thomas of Edessa's (d. 543) East Syriac text of the same title[41] reveals that Moshe Bar Kepha used Thomas' text as a model and main source for his own Cause.[42] One aspect of Moshe Bar Kepha's adaptation of Thomas's text involved clarifying and adjusting the christological terms distinct to the Church of the East to his West Syriac readers and listeners. Despite the fact that Thomas of Edessa himself was less interested in the christological controversy, in the few places where technical christological terminology peculiar to the Church of the East occurs, Moshe Bar Kepha adjusts the language to more common expressions. For instance, Moshe Bar Kepha avoids using the

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[39] Recent editions: G. Kiraz, ed., *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîṭtâ and Ḥarklean Versions*. New Testament Tools and Studies 21.1–4 (Leiden and New York and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996); A. Juckel, "Research on the Old Syriac Heritage of the Peshitta Gospels: A Collation of MS Bibl. Nationale syr. 30 (Paris)," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 12.1 (2009): 41–115.

[40] R. A. Aytoun, "The Mysteries of Baptism," *The Expositor Times*, Ser. 8, Vol. 2 (1911): 338–58.

[41] See above for the printed edition of Cause on Nativity written by Thomas of Edessa. For a brief introduction to Thomas of Edessa, see A. Becker, "Toma of Edessa," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage,* ed. S. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 416.

[42] A. Baumstark, "Die nestorianischen Schriften," 320; T. Hainthaler, "Thomas of Edessa, Causa de Nativitate," 65.

terms "the man of our Lord, who was called the Son of God"[43] or simply "the man of our Lord" (ܒܪܢܫܐ ܡܪܝܢ), which occurs several times. Likewise, Moshe Bar Kepha avoids the argument on the topic of "God's Suffering," swiftly mentioned by Thomas of Edessa,[44] rather than give the counter-argument for the position of his church on this christological subject (as detailed by Philoxenus of Mabbugh, for instance).[45] Similarly, rather than express disagreement on the description of Christ's humanity as "the temple,"[46] which originated in the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428),[47] Moshe Bar Kepha refers to Mary's womb as "the purified dwelling place" in which the King dwelt.[48] Moshe Bar Kepha demonstrates familiarity

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[43] S. Carr, ed., *Thomae Edesseni Tractatus de Nativitate*, 51; it reads: ܒܪܢܫܐ ܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܬܩܪܐ ܒܪܗ ܕܐܠܗܐ

[44] S. Carr, ed., *Thomae Edesseni Tractatus de Nativitate*, 47.

[45] For a summary of Philoxenus of Mabbugh's position, see D. Viezure, "Philoxenus of Mabbug and the Controversies over the 'Theopaschite' Trisagion,"' *Studia Patristica* 47 (2010): 137–146, see esp. 139. See the Syriac text along with Arabic translation in R. Akhras, الرسائل العقيدية لمار فيلكسينوس المنبجي [The Dogmatic Letters of Mar Philoxenus of Mabbugh, Vol. 1] (Lebanon: Ruhana, 2007), esp. 232–235.

[46] Thomas of Edessa used the term "temple" three times in a clear reference to Christ's humanity. See S. Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 3, p.13, ch. 7, p. 53, ch. 8, p. 55.

[47] J. Vosté, ed., Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis Apostoli CSCO 115–116, Syr. 62–63 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1940), 33, (tr.), 22.

[48] As if Moshe Bar Kepha adjusts the image of Mary as a holy, purified house (palace), where the King came and dwelt in it. This image is found in the common prayers of the week for the Syrian Orthodox Church. In those prayers, a supplication attributed to Jacob of Sarugh reads: ܫܠܡ ܠܟ ܗܝܟܠܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܚܬ ܘܫܪܐ ܒܟ. "Peace be with you, O' palace of the King, who came down and dwelt in you." *The Book of Common Prayer According to the Order of the Syriac Church of Antioch* [in Syriac] (Beirut: Maouchy and Zakaria Press, 1982) 47. The same image is depicted by Narsai of the Church of the East, saying: ܡܢ ܪܡܐ ܢܚܬ ܠܥܡܩܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܒܨܒܝܢܘܬܗ ܕܨܒܝܢ ܗܘܐ: ܘܒܢܐ ܒܝܬܐ ܕܒܣܪܐ ܒܨܒܝܢܘܬܗ ܕܨܒܝܢ ܗܘܐ. "He traveled from the height and came down to the depth willingly. He constructed a dwelling place in the palace of flesh in accord with His will." See Frederick G. McLeod,

with the Christology of the Church of the East and its terminology, which he explains to his Syrian Orthodox readers in common language, adding equivalent notions and metaphors free from controversial, dogmatic watchwords. Aside from this, both Thomas of Edessa and Moshe Bar Kepha did not raise any controversial christological terms, such as Nature, Hypostasis, Person, Will, Power, and so forth. Both tend to directly quote Scripture for expressing the divine dispensation enacted by Jesus Christ, rather than reiterate cut-and-dried dogmatic christological statements.

ECUMENISM IN MOSHE BAR KEPHA'S CAUSE

Moshe Bar Kepha and his congregation refer to the authors of the Causes as "the divine men, who spoke through the Holy Spirit."[49] These "divine men" are the authors of the Church of the East who wrote the Causes, among them Thomas of Edessa, whose Cause on the Nativity became a base for Moshe Bar Kepha's own Cause. This approach Moshe Bar Kepha's is unsurprising, since he tends to provide his thoughts in an ecumenical manner, avoiding the use of controversial christological terminology. This tendency becomes more apparent when he deals with writers such as Thomas of Edessa, who, in turn, is not obtrusive in christological, controversial topics.[50] As one can sense in Moshe Bar Kepha's introduction, these Causes, written by the fathers of the Church of the East, were read to and circulated among Moshe Bar Kepha's congregation, and probably the schools, where "lovers of the divine knowledge"[51] urged him to simplify the language of the Causes in order for them fully comprehend it.[52] In addition to his writings,

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ed., *Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension: Critical Edition of Syriac Text*, PO 40.1 [182] (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), 42.

[49] Fol. 1r reads: ܐܢܘܢܐ ܕܐܠܗܝܬܐ: ܕܒܪܘܚܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܡܠܠܘ.

[50] W. Macomber, *Six Explanations,* XV–XVI.

[51] BL Add 17188, fol. 1r.

[52] As Macomber, Becker argues that the Causes were associated with the schools since the early sixth century, and that they become integral to the schools' curriculum; both argued that evidence from the Causes' text

Moshe Bar Kepha was reported to have positive relations with all Christian sects, especially the Church of the East.[53] Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), in his *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, spoke highly of ʿAbdisoʿ of Maʿaltan, the Catholicos of the Church of the East; he also complimented Moshe Bar Kepha and his disciple Bar Nasiha, who became a tutor of the Catholicos.[54]

APOLOGY FOR CHRISTIANITY

In the last two chapters of this Cause, Moshe Bar Kepha adds a new dimension to his argument, namely, an apologetic response to "those who are not convinced of the true faith." While throughout the Cause he carefully chooses his christological terms in order to be inclusive of all Christian denominations, Moshe Bar Kepha appears to become vocal in responding to those who object to "the true faith." By the ninth century, the topic of the Trinity was among the hottest points of Christian-Muslim controversy.[55] Ministering as a bishop to a large diocese in Mosul, Beth Remman, and Beth Arabaye, in the heart of the Abbasid homeland, one expects that he and his congregation experienced frequent Muslim objections to Christian beliefs.[56] As with many Christian apologists, Moshe Bar Kepha avoids mentioning the terms "Islam" or "Muslims" in his writings due to the known socio-political restrictions imposed on Christians since the beginning of Abbasid rule.[57]

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shows that the students used to copy and memorize them. See Macomber, *Six Explanations*, VII–X; Becker, *Fear of God*, 102.

[53] J. Coakley, "The Explanations of the Feasts of Moše bar Kepha," 408.

[54] J. Abbeloos, and T. Lamy, eds. *Gregorii Barhebræi Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Maisonneuve and Louvain: Peeters, 1877), 215, 251.

[55] S. Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts: From Patriarch John (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286)," in *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. B. Lewis and F. Niewöhner, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien 4 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 254.

[56] S. Griffith, "'Free Will in Christian Kalâm: Moshe bar Kepha Against the Teachings of the Muslims," *Le Muséon* 100.1–2 (1987): 146.

[57] J. Fiey, *Ahwal Al-Nasara* [أحوال النصارى في خلافة بني عباس] trans. Husni Zinah (Beirut: Oriental Library, 1990), 141–142; *Chrétiens Syriaques*

Among these restrictions was the implementation of the so-called "Conditions of ʿUmar,"[58] by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847–861), which clearly states: "If any of you says of the Prophet, of God's book or his religion what is unfitting, he is debarred from the protection of God, the Commander of the Faithful, and all Muslims; the security which was given is annulled."[59] In his exegetical work, *Hexameron*, Moshe Bar Kepha referred to al-Mutawakkil by his first name, Jaʿfar, as he bitterly complained about his imprisonment of the Christian clergies.[60] Yet Moshe Bar Kepha surreptitiously responds to Muslim objections for instructing his community as a way of apology for the Christian faith. Even in his direct response to the Islamic tenet of Free Will and Predestination,[61] he does not explicitly name his Muslim opponents. The name *Mhaggrāye*, does, however, occur in the title of one of the chapters.[62] If the title was indeed the composition of Moshe Bar Kepha, then it is the only place where he explicitly refers to Muslims.[63]

Sous Les Abbasides surtout à Bagdad (749–1258), CSCO 420, Subs. 59 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1980), 87–90.

[58] These were attributed to ʿUmar b. al-Khattab, the second Rashidite Caliph (d. 644).

[59] A. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of ʿUmar* (London and New York, Routlege: 2008), 12.

[60] L. Schlimme, *Der Hexaemeronkommentar des Moses bar Kepha: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Untersuchungen*, Göttinger Orientforschungen, I. Reihe: Syriaca 14, Teil II (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 644.

[61] Directly and exclusively, Moshe Bar Kepha wrote one apology for the Christian belief on Free Will, see S. Griffith, "'Free Will in Christian Kalâm: Moshe bar Kepha Against the Teachings of the Muslims," *Le Muséon* 100.1–2 (1987): 143–159.

[62] BL Add., 14731, fol. 11r. reads: ܡܬܠܐܝ ܕܡܗܠܠ ܡܢܩܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܗܓܪܝܐ ܐܝܟ ܗܘܢ ܕܡܬܐܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܠܢ ܛܒܐ ܘܒܝܫܐ. "Chapter six: against the *Mhaggrāye*, who also remove freedom; and they say that we are predestined for us good and evil by God."

[63] For the association of the name *Mhaggrāye* with Muslims, see A. Saadi, "Nascent Islam in the Seventh Century Syriac Sources," in *The Qur'ān in its Historical Context*, ed. G. Reynolds (London and New York:

In this Cause, Moshe Bar Kepha responds to aspects of this topic of trinity expected to be raised by Muslims: "Why did not the Father or the Spirit come to the salvation of the human beings but rather God the Word?" Moshe Bar Kepha affirms that all actions that were done by the divine economy for our salvation are common to the whole Trinity. After quoting Scriptures and explaining the oneness of action of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, he states that since the three of them are One and the same nature, will, and power, likewise the deed is one. A similar argument of the equality of the Father and the Son was made by the eighth century East Syriac apologist, Theodore Bar Kōnī,[64] to his Muslim interlocutor, who rejected the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.[65] On the Muslim side, the ninth-century Muslim scholar, ʿAbd al-Jabbār Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī in his turn, wrote a refutation to the above Christian statement, which is very similar to Moshe Bar Kepha's statement.[66]

In the following paragraph, Moshe Bar Kepha demonstrates the common Christian belief in the Holy Trinity, and Jesus' power to create and raise from the dead just as the Father and the Holy Spirit. This emphasis is a clear reference to the Muslim confession of Jesus' power to create living "birds," and raise the dead, as recorded in the Qur'ān.[67]

Routledge, 2008), 217–222. More views on the term "*Mhaggrāye*" see S. Griffith, "Free Will," 151–154.

[64] On Theodore Bar Kôni's identity and date, see the discussion of S. Griffith, "Theodore bar Kôni's Scholion: A Nestorian Summa contra Gentiles from the First Abbasid Century," in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period. Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, 1980*, ed. Nina G. Garsoïan, Thomas F Mathews, and Robert W. Thomson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 54–55.

[65] Addai Scher, ed. *Theodorus bar Kōnī. Liber Scholiorum*, CSCO Syr. II. 66 (Paris: Typographeo Reipublicae 1912) 278; see also S. Griffith, "Chapter Ten of the Scholion: Theodore Bar Kôni's Apology for Christianity," *OCP* 47 (1981): 158–188, esp. 180–182.

[66] D. Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*, History of Christian–Muslim Relations 10 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 256–257.

[67] See the explanation in ch. 8, along with its references.

In the last paragraph, Moshe Bar Kepha responds to a question often raised by Muslims concerning the Trinity: "Why is not the Father or the Spirit incarnated, but the Son?" In reply, Moshe Bar Kepha uses a philosophical argument, which is summarized as follows: the Father is the Cause of the Son through birth, and the Holy Spirit through procession. By the ninth century, this notion was intensely debated and elaborately developed but did not convince the Muslims. For instance, the ninth century Muslim writer, al-Nāshi' al-Akbar, recorded the Christian statement on this subject and labeled it in this manner, "There is nothing more patent than the fallacy of what they teach on this."[68]

MOSHE BAR KEPHA'S *CAUSE* IN COMPARISON WITH THOMAS OF EDESSA'S *CAUSE*

The following is a summary of Moshe Bar Kepha's *Cause on the Nativity*, showing the degree of his dependence on the earlier Cause of Nativity by Thomas of Edessa. Half of Moshe Bar Kepha's chapters (four out of a total of eight chapters) deal with the theme of Nativity, but independently from Thomas of Edessa. The other four chapters are chapter 2 of Moshe Bar Kepha, which corresponds with chapter 3 of Thomas of Edessa, chapter 3 of Moshe Bar Kepha, which corresponds with chapter 4 of Thomas of Edessa, chapter 5 of Moshe Bar Kepha, which corresponds to both chapters 9 and 10 of Thomas of Edessa, and chapter 6 of Moshe Bar Kepha, which corresponds to chapter 7 of Thomas of Edessa. With the exception of a few expressions, even when Moshe Bar Kepha adopts the entire argument of Thomas of Edessa, he never copies or appropriates Thomas of Edessa's composition.

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[68] D. Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*. 67, 64–67. Similar argument made by Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq; see D. Thomas, ed., *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam, Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"* (Cambridge/ New York/ Port Chester/ Melbourne/ Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 66.

I have divided the chapters of Moshe Bar Kepha into numbered paragraphs. In the case of Thomas of Edessa's Cause, I refer to the number of the chapter and page in Carr's edition.[69]

Chapter 1

Moshe Bar Kepha provides an Introduction to the Cause of the Nativity, explaining the concept of the feast in general and the feast of the Nativity in particular, which is the aim of the chapters to follow.

(1.1) Independently from Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha composes a new introduction for the Cause for the Occasion of the Nativity, demonstrating the ultimate renewal of the entire world by the birth of Christ. He cites the Psalms as a prophecy that foretold the cause of the nativity of Christ, where the earth praises and serves the Lord in fear and cheer (Ps 100:1–2). Moshe Bar Kepha further explains the two births of the Son of God, the eternal birth from the Father, and the birth in time from Mary; yet Moshe Bar Kepha reasserts that "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

(1.2) In this paragraph, Moshe Bar Kepha introduces his own composition on the significance of each feast that the Church celebrates. He emphasizes that although each one of them is called a "feast," each has its peculiarity and distinctiveness.

(1.3) This paragraph, too, is peculiar to Moshe Bar Kepha. He clarifies that our Lord has two births: one eternal from the Father, and one in time from the Holy Virgin. He concludes that the Church celebrates the Lord's birth from the Holy Virgin, which should lead us to believe in his eternal birth from the Father.

Chapter 2

The title of the second chapter is part of the first paragraph; it reads, "Why Does the Church Celebrate the Feast of the Nativity Every Year?" This chapter corresponds to the third chapter of

[69] S. Carr, ed., *Thomae Edesseni Tractatus de Nativitate Domini Nostri Christi* (Roma: Typis R. Academiae Lynceorum, 1898).

Thomas of Edessa's Cause,[70] which carries a similar title. In this section, Moshe Bar Kepha draws heavily on Thomas of Edessa, developing a similar discussion and conclusion.

(2.1–4) In these four paragraphs, Moshe Bar Kepha clearly uses Thomas of Edessa's *Cause for Nativity*. Moshe Bar Kepha picks up Thomas of Edessa's argument about the significance of the birth of our Lord in flesh in comparison with the miraculous birth of other Old Testament figures. Moshe Bar Kepha uses the same argument and the same examples and metaphors but with his own wording and literary style. The examples are the miraculous births of Adam, of Eve, and of Isaac (from Abraham and Sarah).[71] Like Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes that the Church does not celebrate the feast merely because the birth was a miraculous birth; otherwise, it would have celebrated all these births, not only Christ's.

(2.5) Moshe Bar Kepha quotes Thomas of Edessa's topical sentence almost verbatim, that is, "It is obvious we do not celebrate a feast as we behold the outward appearances."[72] Then Moshe Bar Kepha proceeds on his own to further clarify the reason why we celebrate this feast, saying: "We look at the abundant richness of His goodness toward us, and the great love with which He overwhelmed our mortal human race." Moshe Bar Kepha adds also a comparison between the greatness of God's revelations both on Mount Sinai to Moses (Ex 19:16–19) and to Ezekiel (Ezek 1:4–28), and God's quiet revelation in Bethlehem. Moshe Bar Kepha implies that despite its quietness in outward appearance, it was superior to all other revelations.

(2.6) By way of concluding this chapter, Moshe Bar Kepha reemphasizes the main reason for celebrating the nativity of our Lord. He states that the Church does not celebrate the nativity of our Lord merely because of His miraculous birth, but rather be-

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[70] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 3, pp. 10–16.

[71] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 3, pp. 11,12.

[72] It reads: ܐܠܐ ܟܚܫܐ ܗܒ ܒܟܘ ܕܒ ܣܢܝܡܘ ܕܗܘܟܝ ܕܬܢܝܐ ܕܥܠܡܟܝ ܚܐܘܐ; see S. Carr, ch. 3, pp. 13, 15.

cause of the abundant richness of God's goodness that was bestowed upon us, human beings; these "goods" are, by far, much more than the "goods" that were granted to human beings when God created them. Moshe Bar Kepha counts many "goods," supporting them with biblical quotations. Similar to Thomas of Edessa,[73] Moshe Bar Kepha ends the chapter by confirming the hope for the ultimate "goods," praying to be worthy of receiving these "goods" in Christ's second coming.

Chapter 3

Again, in this chapter, Moshe Bar Kepha heavily draws on Thomas of Edessa's text, which carries a similar title: "On the good gifts that were granted to human beings by Christ, our Lord."[74] The contents of this chapter correspond to the fourth chapter of Thomas of Edessa.

(3.1) Like Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha introduces the topic of this chapter on the good gifts that were bestowed upon us, human beings, by Christ. Because of these good gifts, Moshe Bar Kepha asserts, Christians take care to celebrate the nativity of our Lord in joy.

(3.2) Thomas of Edessa begins by detailing the implication of the annunciation of the angels to the shepherds (Lk 2:14),[75] but Moshe Bar Kepha recounts the many announcements of the angels: One to Mary and Joseph, another to the shepherds, another to the Magi, and finally as a great angelic host declaring, "Glory to God in the highest…." At the conclusion of this paragraph, just as Thomas of Edessa wrote, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes the paragraph by giving the reason why the angels were so happy about "the good gifts." He repeats Thomas of Edessa, saying, "For the holy angels are as our peers in creation, so they grieve at our perdition; and they rejoice in our salvation."[76]

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[73] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 3, p. 16.

[74] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, p. 16.

[75] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, pp. 16–18.

[76] Cf. Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, pp. 16, 17.

(3.3) Moshe Bar Kepha draws from Thomas of Edessa the metaphor of cutting and casting away the unhealthy member of the body (cf. Mt 5:29–30),[77] saying that because of our sins, we, human beings, were cut off from the healthiness of worshiping God. Furthermore, Moshe Bar Kepha uses Thomas of Edessa's idea that the angels, as our peers in creation, were sad about our loss, and now are rejoicing for our return;[78] for this reason, the angels cheered "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good will toward men." Thomas of Edessa detailed "the three components of the verse" as the good gifts, and Moshe Bar Kepha follows the same idea, grouping the first two components of the angels' proclamation to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest" and "Peace on earth," in one shorter paragraph.

(3.4) Independently, Moshe Bar Kepha explains the third component of the angelic glorification (Lk 2:14). Whereas Thomas of Edessa quotes the verse from the Peshiṭta, Moshe Bar Kepha quotes a reading similar to the Harklean's. Moshe Bar Kepha explains that "Good will among human beings" refers to those who were justified by faith and became part of God's household. After some elaboration, he summarizes the three components of the verse.

(3.5) Moshe Bar Kepha recasts Thomas of Edessa's ideas about the benefit to the Israelites from Christ's nativity,[79] clarifying: "They were exalted from the manners of children to become worthy of the perfect knowledge of the Holy Trinity." Using different words, Moshe Bar Kepha uses Thomas of Edessa's metaphor concerning the Israelites as a weaned child,[80] that is, "when a child is weaned from milk and is brought to real food, his parents rejoice with great joy."

(3.6) In the concluding paragraph of this chapter, Moshe Bar Kepha quotes Thomas of Edessa literally, with some modification

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[77] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, pp. 16–17.
[78] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, p. 17.
[79] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, pp. 19, 23.
[80] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, p. 23.

to make the text more easily read. The paragraph argues that if there still are people who have not believed in Christ, it is their fault, since Christ has issued an open invitation to all.[81]

Chapter 4

Independently from Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha provides a chapter on "The Peace Given by the Angel to the Holy Virgin."

(4.1) After a brief introduction, Moshe Bar Kepha introduces the title of this new chapter.

(4.2) Moshe Bar Kepha explains that Christ was born in order to reconcile heavenly beings with earthly beings, and to proclaim peace to everyone. Moshe Bar Kepha then focuses on Mary by giving an example of a house that is to become a dwelling place for a king. The house must be cleansed, sanctified, and decorated beautifully; it was likewise befitting for Mary to hear the adoring peace and become purified first in order for the King to dwell (in her). In this metaphor, he hints at the christological teaching of the Church of the East, which describes the body of Christ, that is, the humanity, as "the temple," in which the Son of God, the divine, took from Mary in the incarnation. Instead of criticizing it, he redefines "the temple" in a metaphorical way as being the cleansed and purified house that befits the King to dwell in it, in reference to Mary's womb.[82]

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[81] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 4, pp. 24–25. Obviously, Thomas of Edessa was elaborating on Theodore of *Mopsuestia's commentary on John 1:10–13. Moshe Bar Kepha, who shows familiarity with Theodore's writings, with no hesitation adopts this same explanation. See* Jean Baptiste Chabot, ed., *Commentarius Theodori Mopsuesteni in Evangelium D. Johannis in libros VII partitus: Versio syriaca juxta codicem parisiensem CCCVIII edita. Tomus I: Textus syriacus* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1897), 33.

[82] The notion of "Mary being cleansed and purified as the Son of God dwelt in her" abounds in Syriac literature from the time of St. Ephrem. See, for instance, Ephrem's description in E. Beck, ed., *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Ecclesia*, CSCO 198, Syr. 84 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1960), 90.

(4.3) Moshe Bar Kepha elaborates on the significance of peace given by God to all peoples (and consequently to Mary) by giving two examples from the Scriptures. First, God's command to Moses to initiate peace with his enemies (Deut 20:10–12). In this way, Christ, who also came to reconcile enemies, announced peace unto them. Second, Christ commanded his disciples first to give peace (cf. Lk 10:5). Moshe Bar Kepha concludes from the Scriptures that those who accept the peace will live, but those who reject it will perish.

(4.4) Moshe Bar Kepha poses and answers a question about the necessity of sending an angel before Christ's coming. In his response, Moshe Bar Kepha draws a clear parallel between the coming of Christ to dwell in Mary, and the coming of Christ to dwell among (in) us, human beings. Furthermore, Moshe Bar Kepha explains that because this peace that was given by the angel Gabriel (Lk 1:28), it was an indicator of the marvelous deed to come. Moshe Bar Kepha concludes this paragraph by emphasizing the fact that Christ the savior is not only savior for a single people but for the entire (creation) under heaven.

(4.5) Moshe Bar Kepha relates the affirmation of the angel Gabriel to Mary that "The Holy Spirit will come, and the Power of the Most High overshadows you." Then he explains that the Power of the Most High is Christ, who dwelt in the virgin womb for nine months and was born without breaking the seal of virginity.

Chapter 5

Under the title "Why was Christ born in the time of the census?" Moshe Bar Kepha discusses both the nativity at the time of the census and the time of the annunciation of the birth of Christ. In the first three paragraphs, Moshe Bar Kepha does not draw on Thomas of Edessa. He makes his own argument on the nativity at the time of the census; then he follows it with three paragraphs (4, 5, and 6) on the annunciation of the birth of Christ, in which he draws significantly on Thomas of Edessa's chapter 9.

(5.1) Moshe Bar Kepha relates the biblical account concerning the census decreed by Augustus Caesar and connects this earthly census with the heavenly census effected by the nativity. Additionally, the census was an indication that the rulers of the Israelites had ceased to exist, and it was therefore the predicted time for the com-

ing of the Messiah in accordance with the prophecy of Jacob, the head of the fathers. Moshe Bar Kepha follows the common exegesis to both East and West Syriac interpretation on Genesis 49:10 as messianic proper.[83]

(5.2) Moshe Bar Kepha comments on Luke 2:7, "But they found no room in the lodging place." He wonders, saying, "Why could the founder of the earth not find a room?" Furthermore, according to Moshe Bar Kepha, Christ found human beings to be animal-like; thus Christ was born in a manger in order to become food for them and elevate them to the rank of rational humans.[84] Finally, Moshe Bar Kepha states concerning Christ: "He was wrapped with swaddling cloths" in order to release humans from the swaddling cloths of sin.[85]

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[83] As Aphrahat and Ephrem, most East and West Syriac interpreters see this verse (Gen 49:10) as a messianic prophecy proper. Moshe Bar Kepha, likewise, emphasizes the fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy in Jesus Christ. In Ephrem, See R. -M. Tonneau, *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii*, SCSO 152, Scriptores Syri 71 (Lovanii: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1955), 113–114; L. Leloir, ed., *Saint Éphrem. Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant: texte syriaque (Manuscrit Chester Beatty 709)*, Chester Beatty Monographs 8 (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1963), 24. In Aphrahat, see J. Parisot, *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes I–XXII*, Patrologia Syriaca 1.1 (Paris: Fermin–Didot, 1894), 59–60, 759–760, 805–806, 885–886. In Jacob of Sarug, see F. Rilliet, ed., *Jacques de Saroug: Six homélies festales en prose*, PO 43.4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 590. In Narsai, see A. Mingana, ed., *Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina*. Vol. 1 (Mosul: Typis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 1905), 307–308.

[84] *Commentary on the Luke*, fol. 22v. Moshe Bar Kpha, in his turn, adopted and elaborated on this image from Philoxinus of Mabbugh. See J. W. Watt, *Philoxenus of Mabbug. Fragments of the Commentary on Matthew and Luke*, CSCO 392–393, Syr 171–172 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1978), 37 (txt), 32–33 (trans).

[85] *Commentary on the Luke*, fol. 22r.

(5.3) Moshe Bar Kepha beholds the miraculous event of the nativity as beyond human capability to comprehend.[86] He reminds his readers of this, instructing them not to investigate deeper questions such as, "How did the Spirit perform this by means of the Virgin?" He concludes that since the work of natural things is hard to explain, how could anybody explain the supernatural work of the Spirit?[87]

(5.4) Moshe Bar Kepha shifts into a new topic: the significance of the date of the annunciation. In this paragraph, Moshe Bar Kepha adopts the entire argument of Thomas of Edessa.[88] He argues that God the Word fixed the time in April to come in the womb,[89] which is the same date on which God created the entire creation.[90]

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[86] This approach of discussing the divine dispensation is typical in most writings of Syriac Christianity. St. Ephrem is the most prominent proponent of this approach. Cf. S. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East," in *Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East: Proceedings of the International Conference*, ed. D.E. Afinogenov, and Alexej V. Muravjev, Alexej (Moscow: Indrik, 1996) 165; see also D. Taylor, "The Syriac Tradition," in *The First Christian Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Church*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 206.

[87] The same notion is discussed in detail by Moshe Bar Kepha in his *Commentary on the Luke*, fol. 10r.

[88] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, Ch. 9, p. 57, and Ch. 10, p. 60.

[89] The Church of the East used to celebrate Christmas Day on January 6 and the Feast of Annunciation in April. The tradition of this date was well established by the time of St. Ephrem (d. 373), who explained the theological significance of both dates. See E. Beck, ed., *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnes de Nativitate (Epiphani)*, CSCO, 186, Scriptores Syri 82 (Louvain: Secretariat du CorpusSCO, 1959), 137. See also C. McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac Ms 709 with Introduction and Notes*, Journal of Semitic Studies Supplements 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 57.

[90] Although Moshe Bar Kepha repeats this notion from Thomas of Edessa, he is familiar with it from the writing of St. Ephrem, since he attributes this notion to St. Ephrem in his *Commentary on Luke*, cf. fol. 1r. See also Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis in Raymond Tonneau, ed., *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commentarii*, CSCO 152, Syr. 71 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955), 12.

The parallel in time, Moshe Bar Kepha argues, teaches that He is the same creator and the renewer of creation by means of conception and birth in flesh.

(5.5) Like Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha uses the natural phenomenon of the changing of the seasons.[91] Both relate the date of nativity to the date when the light begins to overcome the darkness. Before this date, darkness constantly increases, as the plants and the trees become fruitless. Likewise, during the "dark period," human beings are deprived and stripped of all deeds of righteousness. Christ, however, came and drove them away from the evil darkness of sin. Both Thomas of Edessa and Moshe Bar Kepha shift their argument from the date of annunciation to the date of nativity, when the light begins to conquer.[92]

(5.6) Dependent on Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha turns his argument against the heathen who celebrate the natural phenomenon of the Winter Solstice for its own sake. Both Thomas of Edessa and Moshe Bar Kepha argue that the benefit of the Winter Solstice is exactly the same as the Summer Solstice. Therefore, the heathen should have celebrated two feasts in both seasons.[93]

Chapter 6

Although the wording of the titles is different, both Thomas of Edessa and Moshe Bar Kepha discuss the necessity of the revelation of the Word of God in flesh. Thomas of Edessa titles his seventh chapter, "For what reasons our Lord God took nothing else but our human form for His revelation in this time."[94] Moshe Bar Kepha titles this chapter, "He was revealed not as before, in various visions and images, but he was incarnated and became a human for our sake."[95] After elaborating on the necessity of Christ's

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[91] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, Ch. 10, pp. 60–61.

[92] Saadi, ed., *Commentary on Luke*, cf. fol. 1r.

[93] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 10, p. 61.

[94] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 7, p. 44 reads: ܡܢܘܢ ܡܛܠܝܗܘܢ ܢܣܒ ܡܪܝܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܠܐ ܢܣܒ ܡܕܡ ܐܚܪܢܐ ܒܗܕܐ ܙܒܢܐ: ܐܠܐ ܐܢ ܟܕ ܢܦܠ ܒܦܓܪܢ.

[95] Moshe Bar Kepha avoids the usage of Thomas of Edessa's term, "he took our human," or more literally, "he took the human which is

incarnation, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes his chapter by saying, "These are the reasons for God the Word to come for our salvation, and no one else of his servants."

(6.1) Thomas of Edessa detailed the various visions and revelations of God to human beings in the Old Testament, and concluded that in the time of fulfillment God fully revealed Himself as a perfect human being.[96] Moshe Bar Kepha summarizes Thomas of Edessa's argument and supports it with a quotation from the Letter to the Hebrews. Avoiding controversial christological terminologies, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes that God's revelation today is not as before in various visions and images, but in Christ, who became human without change.

(6.2) Moshe Bar Kepha poses the question, "What is the cause of His incarnation and revelation?" In response, Moshe Bar Kepha summarizes Thomas of Edessa's discussion of this topic[97] and cites the Letter to Hebrews and the Gospel of John. Moshe Bar Kepha writes that the holy apostle teaches us, saying, "Since the children participated in the blood and flesh, he likewise participated in these same, that by means of his death would void the one who holds the power of death, who is Satan. And he released those who were in bondage under him" (cf. Heb 2:14–15). And concerning this, the Savior himself said: "I came to the world as the light that everyone who believes in me will not remain in the darkness" (Jn 12:46).

(6.3) While Thomas of Edessa discussed at length the feeble human nature after the transgression of Adam, which finally necessitated God's redemption and salvation through human nature,[98] Moshe Bar Kepha takes this idea as a starting point and elaborates independently. Moshe Bar Kepha speaks about human beings' need for Christ (the incarnated God) to heal the sickness of human nature.

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from us," (ܡܢܢ ܟܝܢܘܬܢ ܘܡܢܝ), which is peculiar to the Christology of the Church of the East. Instead, he uses a more common expression for incarnation, while emphasizing that it happened "without change."

[96] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 7, p. 45.

[97] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 7, p. 45.

[98] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, Ch. 7, pp. 45–46.

Likewise, he relates that since humans fell from grace, human beings have longed for Christ to care for them and raise them up. Furthermore, he relates that human beings were confined in darkness and were in need of the true light to enlighten them. Moshe Bar Kepha portrays humans as having lost the royal image, the image of God; thus human beings, Moshe Bar Kepha continues, became in dire need of the One who is able to renew them and restore their former beauty that was ordained by God at creation. Finally, invoking the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Moshe Bar Kepha depicts the humans as the lost sheep who patiently waited for the good shepherd to find them, rejoice for them, and count them with those who stayed with grace. The motif of "the born Christ as the Good Shepherd who will find the Lost Sheep" is discussed, in detail, by Moshe Bar Kepha in his *Commentary on Luke*.[99]

(6.4) Independently from Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha elaborates on human beings, who are seeking to restore the image and the likeness of God, which cannot be done by any creature, but by the One who formed the image and likeness from the beginning. Furthermore, Moshe Bar Kepha gives an example of a portrait. If its features become corrupted and faded, the one in the portrait must come again in order for the painter to repaint the original image and likeness over the corrupted image. Moshe Bar Kepha concludes that the splendid image of God was taken from us; therefore, it was necessary for Him to come so that He could redesign us again after His image and likeness with imperishable and incorruptible paints.[100]

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[99] *Commentary on Luke*, fol. 6r.

[100] Moshe Bar Kepha creatively reuses the metaphor of the divine portrait in the human being; this metaphor was first used by Ephrem. See E. Beck, ed., *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, CSCO 154, Syr. 73 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955), xxxi, 5, p. 106. It is relevant to Syriac literature that the divine image inside human beings is to be, as an interior mirror, diligently polished and preserved. See S. Brock, "The Imagery of the Spiritual Mirror in Syriac Literature," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 5 (2005): 4.

(6.5) Moshe Bar Kepha here follows Thomas of Edessa's argument that although God could have redeemed us by a single sign from Him, this would have not served justice.[101] Moshe Bar Kepha elaborates on this motif independently, avoiding Thomas of Edessa's Christology, one peculiar to the Church of the East.[102] Moshe Bar Kepha asks, "Was it appropriate for God to be silent and still, while His creation, which He made to honor Him, served and worshiped another?" To answer this question, Moshe Bar Kepha gives a metaphor of an earthly prosperous king, who will not allow his subjects to worship and serve other kings. Invoking Jesus' parable of the wicked tenants,[103] Moshe Bar Kepha demonstrates how the loving king tries to convince the rebels to reconcile to him. Even more so will God have compassion on His creatures, who went astray from Him, and who neither accepted the books of the Law, nor obeyed the message of the prophets, that He Himself would come and do (the task). These causes necessitated that God the Word come for our salvation, and not someone else from among his servants.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 was written in "Response to Unpersuaded Ones in the Mystery of the Faith." Independently, Moshe Bar Kepha adds the last two chapters of this Cause to educate his readers/listeners with an apology responding to "pagans" (by which he means the Muslims).[104] For various socio-political reasons (including the possibil-

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[101] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 7, p. 48.

[102] Carr, *Thomae Edesseni*, ch. 7, pp. 47–48.

[103] Cf. Mt 21:33–44, Mk 12:1–11, Lk 20:9–18.

[104] It was customary for Syriac Christian writers to call Muslims by name the *ḥanpē* (ܚܢܦܐ), while the Muslims are referred to by a cognate name in Arabic *ḥanīf* (pl. *ḥunafāʾ*), as is recorded in the *Qurʾān*, 2:135, 3:67, 95, 4:125, 6:79, 6:161, 10:105, 16:120–123, 22:31, 30:30, 98:5. In Syriac, however, the name implies "pagans." Few Christian apologists, writing in Arabic, refer to Muslims with this name, due to its double meanings. A ninth-century Christian apologist, al-Kindy, explains to his interlocutor, who called him to convert to Islam, "the *ḥanīf* religion;" al-Kindy says that the "ḥanīf religion" was the pagan religion of Abraham before his belief in

ity of the death penalty) it was not uncommon for many Christian apologists to avoid mentioning Muslims by name when writing Christian apology.[105]

(7.1) Moshe Bar Kepha specifies that this chapter is in response to "pagans," who would deny the concept of the incarnation of God the Word, which is integral to the mystery of the Christian faith. According to Moshe Bar Kepha, the "pagans" claim that it is an insult to God to think of Him as incarnated and being conceived and born as a human by a human (Mary).

(7.2) Moshe Bar Kepha poses the objection of the "pagans" on the impossibility of the birth of God or the Son of God. Moshe Bar Kepha writes that the "pagans" say, "It is absurd even to think that God and the Son of God may come to be born a human, and may be complicated in the processes of birth, and thus the (divine) purity that purifies all may be defiled in the complication with these human matters."

(7.3) In his didactical style of responding, Moshe Bar Kepha asks the "pagans" a question in order to use their expected answer to explain his point. He writes, "First, we would ask them this: 'Can absurdity and defilement be found in good or in bad, and is it shown in bad?' Immediately, they unwillingly answered what is true. For they say that absurdity and defilement is found in bad, while there is nothing of absurdity and defilement in the good." This style of response, asking question to their opponents first, then building the response on the answer received was often used

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God. See William Muir, *The Apology of al Kindy, Written at the Court of al Mamun* (London: Smith, Elder, 1882), 3; رسالة الكندي، مع تعليقات ويليام موير (The Apology of al-Kindy, with Commentaries of William Muir) رسالة عبد الله بن اسمعيل الهاشمي إلى عبد المسيح بن إسحق الكندي، يدعوه بها إلى الإسلام، ورسالة الكندي إلى الهاشمي يردُّ بها عليه، ويدعوه إلى النصرانية, online: www.muhammadanism.org, December 3, 2006 (Arabic), 40.

[105] S. Griffith, "Chapter Ten of the Scholion," 168.

by Christian apologetics beginning from John of Damascus,[106] and followed by other apologists such as Theodore Bar Kōnī.[107] In fact, this style became a common Muslim genre of polemic against Christians or Jews,[108] which later became integral to Islamic *kalām* where it is known as *masā'il wa-ajwiba* (Questions and Answers).[109]

(7.4) Based on their correct answer, Moshe Bar Kepha argues that all that God has ordained is good, as the Scriptures also testifies that "God saw all that he made, and behold, it is very good" (Gen 1:31). Therefore, Moshe Bar Kepha argues that by no means does God consider the conception, birth, and up-bringing as an evil deed. Further, Moshe Bar Kepha enhances his argument by a rhetorical question: "If the conception and birth were evil, why do we not blame those who do it, as we blame those who do bad things?" Likewise, he continues, "Why do we not convict and punish them as evil-doers?" After giving more examples from the experience of daily life, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes that birth is very proper and good; and there is no absurdity in good, or in the Son of God to come to be born a human and have a body.

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[106] D. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1972), Appendix I, *De Haeresibus*, 143–155.

[107] A. Scher, ed. *Theodorus bar Kōnī. Liber Scholiorum*, CSCO Syr. II. 66 (Paris: Typographeo Reipublicae 1912), 232, 237, 238, 244, 245…and so forth. For the genre of Question and Answer in the Syriac literature, see R. ter Haar Romeny, "Question-and-Answer Collections in Syriac Literature," in *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context. Proceedings of the Utrecht Colloquium, 13–14 October 2003*, edited by A. Volgers, and C. Zamagni, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 37. (Louvain: Peeters, 2004), 145–163.

[108] Gabriel Reynolds, "Al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥāqq," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900–1050)*, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 14, eds. D. Thomas, and A. Mallett (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 128.

[109] J. van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), 21–50.

(7.5) In a converse argument, Moshe Bar Kepha clarifies that even if someone would think that conception and birth defile, God the Word cannot be defiled regardless. Moshe Bar Kepha cites the prophet Jeremiah, saying: "The heavens and earth are filled with me, says the Lord" (Jer 23:24). After more elaboration, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes: "If He is not defiled by inhabiting all these (creations), how can we even think that by inhabiting the virgin womb He may be defiled?"

(7.6) Moshe Bar Kepha continues to enhance his argument by citing examples from nature. He speaks about the sun, being pure and transparent. When it shines in the darkness, its light cannot be affected or defiled by the darkness; nor when it heats cold objects, can its heat be affected. Then, after some elaboration, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes, "Now if the sun, being a created thing, cannot be defiled by things that defile, it is impossible for the defilement to touch the creator of the sun."

(7.7) In another example from nature, Moshe Bar Kepha cites the example of fire which can heat and illuminate cold, black iron, while the fire itself is unaffected. Therefore, Moshe Bar Kepha concludes: "If fire's pure nature cannot be defiled with any defilement, it is impossible for God the Word, being the source of goodness, to be defiled."[110]

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[110] Christian apologists frequently used the metaphors of the oneness of the light and/or the heat of the sun, the heat of the fire to prove the oneness of the three divine Hypostases. See S. Griffith, "Chapter Ten of the Scholion: Theodore Bar Kôniʾ's Apology for Christianity," 147. See the refutation of the Christians' claim by the ninth century Muslim apologist, *Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq* in D. Thomoas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam, Abū ʿIsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 68.

Chapter 8

Like chapter 7, chapter 8 was also written as an apology responding to "some people" (by whom he means Muslims) objecting to Christian teaching.[111]

(8.1) This is another new chapter independent from Thomas of Edessa, in which Moshe Bar Kepha poses an objection by "some people" who oppose his community, saying: "Why did not the Father or the Spirit come to the salvation of the human beings but only God the Word?"

(8.2) In response to the above objection, Moshe Bar Kepha offers a series of answers. He argues from the common Christian Trinitarian belief that since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are One of the same nature, the same will, and the same power, the deed, therefore, also belongs to the Holy Trinity.[112] He supports his argument from the Scriptures: "My Father works until now, also I am working" (Jn 5:17). To be specific, Moshe Bar Kepha writes, "And in order not to think that the Father does some things and the Son does different things, but rather he does the same things in equal level, he adds: 'For whatever the Father does, the Son also does these like Him'" (Jn 5:19). In this specification, Moshe Bar Kepha hints at Muslim belief that Christ had the capability to create "birds". Concerning the raising of the dead, Moshe Bar Kepha cites Jesus saying, "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, likewise the Son gives life to whom he will" (Jn 5:21). By bringing up Jesus' power to create and raise the dead,

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[111] While the apologetic theme runs in most of Moshe Bar Kepha's writings, more directly and exclusively wrote an apology for the Christian belief on Free Will; see S. Griffith, "'Free Will in Christian Kalâm: Moshe bar Kepha Against the Teachings of the Muslims," *Le Muséon* 100:1–2 (1987): 143–159.

[112] Theodore Bar *Kōnī* (c. 792) makes the same statement as he responds to a Muslim interlocutor, saying: ܐܠܗܐ ܬܠܬܐ ܗܘܘܢ ܕܠܐ ܚܕ ܛܒܥܐ ܘܚܕ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܘܚܕ ܨܒܝܢܐ. ܠܗܕܐ ܠܝܬ ܠܟ ܡܢܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܬܟ. "They might have been three gods if they were not of one nature, one power, and one will. Therefore, there is no room for your accusation." See A. Scher, ed., *Theodorus bar Kōnī. Liber Scholiorum*, 278.

Moshe Bar Kepha nods at Muslims who confess that that Jesus had the power from God to create and raise the dead.[113]

(8.3) By citing the Scriptures, Moshe Bar Kepha argues that just as the Father and the Son work on an equal level, likewise, the Spirit; for the Scriptures say, "The Spirit is the one who gives life" (Jn 6:63).

(8.4) Moshe Bar Kepha poses a follow-up question for clarity. This time he explains it philosophically, then supports it by Scripture. He asks, "And if these (deeds) belong to the whole (Trinity), why then did not the Father or the Spirit take flesh?" In response, Moshe Bar Kepha argues in philosophical terms, saying that the Father is the Cause of all that exists, He is the Cause of the Son through birth, and the Cause of the Sprit through procession.[114] After some elaboration, Moshe Bar Kepha affirms that it is not suitable to apply the fatherhood to the Son, nor the sonship to the Father, nor the immensity of the divine nature of the Spirit to be defined with limitation. Instead, Moshe Bar Kepha argues, it was fitting for him (the Son), who is known to be begotten from eternity, and at certain time, to be born in flesh for the salvation of humankind.

CONCLUSION

Moshe Bar Kepha adopts the Cause genre – which had been initiated and used by the writers of the Church of the East since the sixth century – and introduces it to the West Syriac Church and its

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[113] The *Qur'ān* speaks of Jesus saying to the Israelites: "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I design for you from clay [that which is] like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird by permission of Allah. And I cure the blind and the leper, and I give life to the dead – by permission of Allah" (Sura 3, al-ʿImran 49); see also Sura 5, al-Ma'ida 110.

[114] This philosophical notion of God the Father is the Cause of both the Son and the Holy Spirit is frequently used in Christian apology till the late 13th century; see Gerasimus (13th century apologist) in A. Bahkou, *Defending Christian Faith: The Fifth Part of the Christian Apology of Gerasimus* (Warsaw/ Berlin: De Gruyter Open Ltd, 2006), 72, 108.

schools. As a chain that linked the earlier exegetical tradition, beginning with Ephrem (d. 373) and probably earlier with the classical period of Syriac writings of the sixth up to the ninth century, Moshe Bar Kepha's contributions provide a fine exegetical harmony across denominational boundaries, mainly of the Church of the East.[115]

Moshe Bar Kepha's Cause consists of eight chapters, as does Thomas of Edessa's Cause, from which Moshe Bar Kepha drew. In Moshe Bar Kepha's work, however, Thomas of Edessa's ideas and information are absorbed and condensed into four chapters. Moshe Bar Kepha's remaining four chapters are independent of Thomas of Edessa.

As Moshe Bar Kepha's Cause demonstrates, his writings did not merely transfer knowledge. He also creatively shapes the writings of early teachers with proper contextualization, providing his readers with easy, accessible literature from which to learn to meet the challenges of their day. Distinctively, Moshe Bar Kepha extended his teaching to address the Muslim challenges of Christian doctrine, instructing his Christian communities with ready answers common to their time.

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[115] A. Vööbus, *Discovery of the Exegetical Works of Moshe bar Kepha: The Unearthing of Very Important Sources for the Exegesis and History of the New Testament Text in the Version of the Vestus Syra*, PETSE, 25 (Stockholm: Cultura, 1973), 11–13.

Text and Translation

FIRST CHAPTER

(Fol. 10r) **THE DEMONSTRATION, THAT IS, THE CAUSE OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST**

1.1 David the divine, the prophet, the priest and the king, seeing the revelation of Christ beforehand by means of prophetic eyes, said: "Praise the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord in fear and cheer."[1] "In fear," (he said) because of sin, but "in cheer," because of hope. And in this way I hold both of them and say: Let the Heaven cheer and let the earth rejoice because the heavenly one became earthly; the deep darkness is dissipated; the light is established. Again, Egypt is tormented by deep darkness, (Fol. 10v) while Israel is shining via the (enlightening) pillar. The old things have passed, and everything has become new. The one with no mother has become without father, "without mother" in the first (birth), "without father" in the second (birth). The one non-carnal has incarnated. The invisible has become visible. The untouchable has become touchable. The Eternal has beginning. The Son of God has become the Son of man.[2] "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever."[3]

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[1] Ps 100:1–2. The first verse agrees with the reading of the Peshitta but the second disagrees.

[2] The last 7 sentences are common paradoxical style in Syriac literature, especially in addressing the divine. Among many examples, see Ephrem's Hymn VIII on Virginity in Beck, ed., *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Virginitate*, CSCO 223, Syr. 94 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1962), VIII, pp. 28–31. For English translation and comments on the Ephrems' paradoxical style of writing, see K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns on the Nativity, Hymns Against Julian, Hymns on Virginity and on the Symbols of the Lord*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 297–300. For a more concentrated study on "the Divine Name," see T. Koonammakkal, *The Theology of Divine Names in the Genuine Works of Ephrem*, Mōrān 'Eth'ō 40 (Kottayam: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 2015).

[3] Heb 13:8.

ܦܨܠܐ ܐܚܕܐ[4]
(ܦܨܠܐ ܥܣܪܐ) ܡܫܡܫܢܐܝܬܐ. ܐܝܟܡܐ ܕܟܠܗ ܘܟܡܐ ܡܬܟܬܒܐ ܒܡܨܪܝܢܐ

1.1 ܒܡܝ ܐܟܘܡܐ ܗܘ ܫܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܒܕܐ: ܟܝ ܕܟܬܝܢܐ ܫܬܘܬܐ ܡܝܬܝ ܡܐ ܡܫܡܫܢܐܝܬܐ ܒܡܨܪܝܢܐ: ܐܝܟ ܗܘܐ ܟܬܝܒ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܟܕܐ ܐܝܟܐ. ܟܕܡܐ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܒܪܝܐ. ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܥܡ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܨܪܝܐ. ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܥܡ ܡܠܟܐ ܫܠܡܐ. ܕܡܒܪܝܐ ܥܡ ܡܠܟܐ ܫܚܢܐ. ܕܐܡܪܐ ܒܐܘܪܫܠܡܐ ܐܝܬܝܐ ܐܦܠ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ: ܫܒܥ ܫܢܝܢ ܐܝܟܐ. ܡܠܟܐ ܒܥܢܢܐ ܐܘܟܢܐ ܗܘܐ. ܫܥܬܐ ܫܥܬܐ. ܫܪܘܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ. ܫܪܝܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܫܥܬܐ ܕܫܥܬܐ (ܦܨܠܐ 10 ܚ) ܫܥܬܐ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܫܪܝܐ. ܟܡܬܫܐ ܚܝܢ.[5] ܡܫܚܬܝܡ ܒܥܐ ܫܒܐ. ܗܘ ܘܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܘܠܐ ܐܚܐ ܗܘܐ. ܘܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܥܒ ܒܒܢܝܐ. ܘܠܐ ܐܚܐ ܕܥܒ ܘܐܘܐܒ. ܗܘ ܠܐ ܟܬܝܢ ܫܪܝܐ. ܠܐ ܫܡܫܢܐ ܫܡܫܐ. ܠܐ ܫܡܫܥܢܐ ܫܡܫܥܢ. ܗܘ ܘܠܐ[6] ܐܝܟ ܕܥܒ ܐܝܟ ܕܗܘ ܘܐܟܘ ܕܗܘ ܘܐܢܐ ܗܘܐ. ܫܥܬ ܕܥܒܝܢ ܐܝܡܝܢ ܕܥܒ ܕܟܬܒ.

[4] The indication for the first chapter is written on the margin. The word for "first" is mistakenly written as ܒܡܢ rather than ܒܡܨܪܝܢ.

[5] Standard spelling of 3fpl. in perfect tense is ܚܝܢ.

[6] Ms. adds another ܘܠ.

1.2 Although all the feasts of the holy Church are called by this name "feast," each one of them takes its own constitution from the particular distinction of particular deeds. Just as the name "human" is applied to the entire human race, the distinction between one and another is recognized by the peculiar identity that defines the person. It is likewise concerning the name of the feast; although all are designated as the Feasts of the Church, their distinction from each other is understood by their peculiar identity.

1.3 Now, the peculiar name that identifies this feast is "the Nativity of our Lord." For when we hear "the Feast of the Nativity," our mind should not hasten toward the various nativities that the Son has. For we know there are two natural births for the Son of God. The first is the one from the Father, which is beyond expression, above times and ages. The second (birth) is this one in which He was born in flesh from the Holy Virgin at the last time. This one occurred especially without marriage in order to lead us toward the exalted faith, that is, his eternal nativity from the Father. From this point, we should understand that if His birth happened by mother without father, even though according to our nature birth is to happen from both father and mother, how much more we should believe that from the Father, without a mother, He was born eternally. We do not, however, celebrate the eternal nativity today, as if we are able to determine the eternal nativity at a certain date in time, which is above times and beyond ages. By His hand, movements and times came to be as it is said:

1.2 ܟܕܐ ܗܘܠܐ ܩܕܡܝܐ ܕܒܝܐ ܥܒܝܐ[7]: ܐܦܝ ܟܡܐ ܗܘܐ ܕܟܕܐ ܡܠܐܟܬܗ.
ܡܘܡܐ ܫܒܝܐ ܕܦܝ ܡܘܡܬܐ ܫܒܬܐ ܢܫܬ ܡܘܡܐ: ܒܚܝܢ ܕܐܠܗ ܟܠܗ
ܥܒ ܥܒ ܦܘܡܐ. ܐܦܐ ܟܝܢ ܕܥܡܐ ܗܘܐ ܕܟܢܐ ܟܠ ܡܟܗ ܡܐ ܢܦܠ
ܐܢܐ: ܡܘܡܐ ܕܝ ܕܥܒ ܦܝ ܥܡܗ: ܡܡܢܐ ܫܒܝܐ ܕܥܡܢܐ ܟܡܘܡܐ
ܦܡܠܐܕܥ: ܗܘܐ ܐܝ ܡܐ ܕܟܕܐ: ܐܦܝ ܟܠ ܩܕܡܝܐ ܟܕܐ ܕܒܝܐ ܡܢܡ:
ܡܘܡܐܕܝ ܕܝ ܕܦܝ ܫܒܕܐ: ܡܡܢܐ ܫܒܝܐ ܦܡܠܐܕܠ.

1.3 ܡܡܐ ܕܝ ܫܒܝܐ ܕܡܡܕܝ ܟܕܐ ܗܘܐ ܐܠܐܘܡ ܦܡ ܥܒܕܗ ܗܘܢ. ܠܐ ܕܝ
ܥܒ ܡܡܢܝ ܟܕܐ ܕܥܒܐ: ܐܐܠ ܐܘܡܐ ܟܘܐ ܥܒܕܐ ܡܦܣܩܐ ܕܐܠܗ ܟܡܢ.
ܐܕܝ ܟܝܢ ܥܒܕܐ ܡܬܢܐ ܒܚܝܢ ܕܐܠܗ ܟܡܢ ܕܐܟܡܐ. ܥܒ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܐ ܐܚ. ܠܐ
ܡܠܦܟܟܢܐܠ ܕܟܢܐ ܡܢ ܐܚ ܘܐܠܗ ܥܒܕܐ ܐܠܐܘܡ. ܐܢܐ ܕܝ ܗܘ ܕܦܝ
ܡܠܦܟܟܢܐ ܥܒܡܐ: ܡܐ ܐܚ ܐܢܐ ܐܠܝܢ ܡܬܟܢ ܡܢ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܐܚ ܐܢ
ܥܒ ܡܢ ܡܢ ܐܚ ܘܐܢ ܐܚ ܐܢ ܡܬܟ ܡܠܦܟܢ: ܡܡܢ ܥܒܢܐ ܕܝ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܟܕ
ܕܒܬܗ: ܦܝ ܐܚ ܘܐ ܐܢ ܡܟ ܡܠܦܟܢ. ܟܕ ܟܝܢ ܘܗ ܥܒܕ ܡܠܦܟܢ
ܟܡܒܬ ܟܕܐ ܥܡܢ. ܐܡܢ ܟܝܢ ܡܠܦܡܢ ܡܠܐܡܢ ܡܡܢ[8] ܡܢ ܐܡܢ:
ܡܡܡܢܬ ܕܐܠܗܡ ܡܥܒܕ ܡܠܦܢ: ܗܘ ܕܘܡ ܡܢ ܐܡܢ ܥܡܢܟ ܡܢ ܠܐܘ.
ܟܐܒܗ ܐܚ ܐܘܕ ܗܘܐ ܐܠܐ ܟܠܦܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܐܢ.

[7] Should be spelled as ܥܒܝܐ.

[8] Could be a scribal error for ܡܫܬ "is calculated".

(Fol. 11r) "By His hand, He created the worlds."[9] For that nativity not only is above and beyond times and ages but also (above and beyond) word and tale. The prophecy testifies, saying: "Who will declare his generation?"[10] Now, if it (the nativity) is above word and prior to times and ages, then it is clear that we do not celebrate the feast of this nativity of undefined time in a definite time. Instead, today we celebrate joyfully the memory of his nativity in flesh that happened from the Virgin in the days of Herod, the king of the Jews, in the year forty-two of Augustus, the Emperor of the Romans.[11]

SECOND CHAPTER
[WHY THE CHURCH CELEBRATES THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY EVERY YEAR]

2.1 We learn from what has been said that the holy Church celebrates the feast of the nativity of the Word of God in the flesh. Now, we ask why in every year (the Church) celebrates it (the feast) diligently? If we regard the greatness of the issue, seeing that the nativity happened without marriage, this makes us see many other things that are wondrous and miraculous, which happened with certain people, such as Adam, Eve, and Isaac, and many like these; each one of them is more admirable than his peer.

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[9] Cf. Acts 17:24, 26; Jn 1:3.

[10] Isa 53:8, Acts 8:33.

[11] The source of Moshe Bar Kepha, most probably, was the Syriac translation of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History since he often quotes him in his *Commentary on Luke*. See W. Wright, William and N. McLean, eds. *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius in Syriac Edited from the Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898), 26. See an English edition of the Eusebius in G. A. Williamson, *Eusebius*, *The History of The Church From Christ to Constantine* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1975), 49.

(ܡܬܠܐ 11) ܘܟܬܒܘ ܠܟܘ ܠܬܠܡܝܕܐ. ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ: ܟܕ ܡܬܚܙܘܢ ܕܐܝܬ
ܠܟܘܢ ܢܘܡܪܐ: ܐܠܐ ܐܦ ܕܐܝܬ ܕܡܬܚܙܐ ܠܐܢܫܐ. ܘܐܡܪܘܢ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܢܝܢܐ ܘܐܡܪܘ:
ܫܘܝܐ ܐܢܘܢ ܬܠܡܝܕܝܟ. ܐܝ ܐܝܬ ܕܐܝܬ ܕܡܬܚܙܐ ܢܘܡܪܐ ܠܟܘܢ ܕܡܬܚܙܐ ܠܒܢܝܢ. ܟܝܐ
ܐܦ ܒܟܘ ܡܬܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܫܟܚܐ: ܡܫܬܡܥܐ ܘܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܐܕܢܐ ܕܫܡܥ ܢܫܡܥ. ܐܠܐ
ܡܬܚܙܝܢܐ ܘܡܬܝܗ ܘܡܚܦܢ ܘܒܗ ܡܫܬܡܥܐ: ܐܦ ܘܡܬܩܪܒܝܢ ܐܦܝܢ ܡܬܚܙܐ
ܘܡܬܦܝܢܐ: ܕܡܚܫܒܐ ܐܬܘܡܝ ܠܐܢܫܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܫܬܡܥܐ ܘܬܡܗܐ ܐܝܟ ܡܬܚܙܐ.
ܡܛܝܢܐ ܡܫܟܚܝܢ ܡܫܦܐ.*

ܡܩܠܐ ܒܐܦ[12]
[ܡܢܝܢ ܗܘܐ ܚܛܐ ܐܝܟ ܫܡܥܘܢܐ ܡܫܚܬܐ ܟܕ ܟܝܠܐ ܕܟܠܗ ܘܡܫܟܚܐ]

2.1 ܟܠܗ ܗܘܐ ܡܬܬܐ ܘܚܦܢ ܘܡܬܚܙܐ ܐܟܘܠ ܡܫܚܬܐ ܒܐ ܕܒܝܥܐ.
ܡܬܩܪܒ ܡܢ ܗܘܟܡ ܕܐܝܬܘܢ.[13] ܬܘܒܐ ܢܢ ܘܡܢܝܢ ܗܘܐ ܚܛܐ ܐܝܟ
ܫܡܥܘܢܐ ܡܫܚܬܐ ܟܕ. ܐܝ ܟܝ ܬܫܐ ܚܙܝܐܗ ܕܪܚܡܐ: ܕܠܐ ܗܘܐ
ܡܕܐ ܐܝܟ ܗܕܐ: ܐܦ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܡܫܬܘܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ. ܐܡܝܢ ܘܡܪܝ ܐܡܪܝܢ[14] ܟܕ
ܐܬܩܝ: ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܒܗܘܢ ܕܐܬܘ ܕܐܦ ܡܢ ܐܝܡ ܕܐܢܫܘܬܐ. ܐܢܬܘܢܐ ܕܐܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܐܝ
ܗܘܝܢ. ܘܟܠ ܡܕ ܕܢܩܡ ܡܢ ܩܕܡܝܗ ܗܘܐ ܟܕܐܝܬ.

[12] The indication for the second chapter is written on the margin.

[13] Ms. ܡܬܩܪܒܝܢ.

[14] The conventional way of writing 3 feminine plural in perfect tense is ܡܪܝܢ.

2.2 Isaac, for instance, was born from barrenness and old age by the promise.[15] Both of them (barrenness and old age) are obstacles for the human nature to produce fruits. For, just as it is a great miracle if someone would cast seeds on the rock, or if he would throw them in a furnace of fire, and sees fruits produced from them, likewise, it is a miracle if a nativity happens when one of these two (obstacles) exists, save if both of them (exist).

2.3 It is more credible that the ground can spring forth without sowing than those seeds that fell in the furnace of fire and still bear fruits.[16] What seems to us as difficulties, for God are simple. More (examples) of this, Eve is a miracle; for concerning Isaac, although barrenness and old age do exist, (natural means also existed, such as) the belly, the womb, and the natural behavior. (F. 11v) Here, however, none of these existed, except for a rib from the side of a male; and suddenly, a complete stature of a woman was seen.

2.4 More miraculous than this is that of Adam. This (Eve) is a living female from a living male, and a sentient female from a sentient male. Adam, however, became a living and sentient being from the earth, which has nothing in common with any one of these.[17]

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[15] Cf. Gal 4:27–28.

[16] Moshe Bar Kepha is using Ephrem's image of Christ as "Fire" in Mary's womb, as well as in the Jordan river at his baptism. Ephrem wrote: ܗܳܐ ܢܘܿܪܳܐ ܘܪܽܘܚܳܐ ܒܿܟܝܳܢܳܐ: ܗܳܐ ܢܘܿܪܳܐ ܘܪܽܘܚܳܐ ܒܿܡܝܳܐ ܕܿܥܡܕܬܳܐ ܒܿܗ ܡܥܡܕܬܳܐ "Behold the Fire and the Spirit are in the womb who bore you, behold Fire and spirit in the river where you were baptized." See E. Beck, ed. *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*, CSCO 154, Syr. 73 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955), x, 17, p. 51.

[17] The motif of Adam being born from the earth (his mother) and Eve was born from Adam (her father) in connection with Christ's birth dominates Syriac literature, the prime source of which is the writing of St. Ephrem. Two examples can be read in the same hymn on the Nativity, one example is read: ܐܪܥܳܐ ܕܐܕܡܳܐ ܡܠܕܬܳܐ ܗܘܳܬ: ܗܳܕܐ ܝܘܿܡܳܐ ܕܡܪܝܳܡ ܒܪܬܳܐ. ܐܕܡܳܐ ܡܪܳܝ ܐܪܥܳܐ ܠܐܝܘܿܡ ܕܡܪܝܳܡ ܒܪܬܳܐ: ܡܪܳܝ ܫܡܝܳܐ "The virgin earth has given birth to Adam, the lord of the earth. Today, the Virgin (Mary) has given birth to (second) Adam, the Lord of heaven." See Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Virginitate*, I. 14, 15, 16, p. 3. Similar typology is to be found in

2.2 ܐܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܒܕܘܗܝ ܕܡܪܝ ܟܢܝܫܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܐܝܟܡܐ: ܠܘܬ
ܡܢܩܘܡܬܐ ܐܝܬܝ ܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝ ܘܟܬܒܘܗܝ ܩܐܡܐ. ܐܝܟ ܕܝܢ ܘܐܘܡܬܐ
ܕܥܕܐ: ܐܝ ܢܦܩܐ ܐܢܐ ܡܢ ܡܪܝ ܐܝܬܝ ܘܢܬܢܐ ܠܟܠ ܚܕܐ: ܐܘ ܐܝ ܢܥܒܐ
ܕܠܐܠܐ ܘܒܢܐ: ܘܢܥܒܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܩܐܡܐ. ܐܦܠܐ ܐܘܡܬܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ. ܐܝ ܢܫܩܠ ܠܟܝ ܐܝܟ ܕܝܢ
ܕܡܪܝ ܐܝܟ ܐܘܡܬܐ ܕܥܒܕ ܐܝܟ ܕܝܢ ܘܐܝܟ ܐܘܡܬܐ.[18] ܐܝܟܐ ܐܝܟ ܘܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ
ܕܡܪܝ ܐܝܟ ܐܘܡܬܐ ܕܥܒܕ.

2.3 ܡܫܬܡܥܬܐ ܕܝܢ ܕܥܒܕܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܒ ܠܐ ܡܬܪܘܢܐ. ܠܘܬ ܡܢ ܡܪܝ ܕܡܬܩܝ ܩܐܡ
ܫܠܝܐ ܕܢܩܝܡ ܠܠܐܠܐ ܕܒܢܐ. ܐܦ ܠܠܟܘܗ ܡܫܬܡܥܬܐ ܕܟܝ ܡܫܬܡܥܬܐ. ܡܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ
ܩܕܡܝ ܐܝܬܝ ܟܝܢ. ܡܫܬܡܥ ܡܢ ܡܪܝ: ܡܢ ܕܫܡܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܘܐܘܡܬܐ. ܟܝܢܐ ܐܢܫܘܬܐ
ܕܝܢ: ܐܦ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܬܡܥ ܕܥܒܕ ܐܝܟ ܕܝܢ. ܐܠܐ ܡܢܗܐ ܕܡܫܬܡܥ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܩܕܡ
(ܘܐ 11 ܚ) ܕܡܪܝ ܕܝܢ ܠܐ ܫܪܐ ܡܢ ܡܪܝ ܕܥܒܕ. ܐܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐ ܕܡܢ ܡܢܗ.
ܕܡܪܝ ܕܩܘܡ. ܒ ܡܢ ܡܢܝ ܐܝܟ ܐܠܐ ܕܡܫܬܡܥܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܪܝ.

2.4 ܕܡܢ ܡܪܝ ܕܩܘܡ ܡܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܠܐ. ܡܪܝ ܫܡܐ ܕܡܢ ܡܪܝ. ܕܡܪܝ ܕܩܘܡ
ܕܩܘܡܬܐ ܡܢ[19] ܕܩܘܡܬܐ. ܐܝܟ ܕܝ ܕܐ: ܡܢ ܕܩܘܡܬܐ. ܡܢ
ܐܝܟ. ܘܠܐ ܡܫܬܡܥ ܡܢ ܡܪܝ.

Jacob of Sarugh, see P. Bedjan, *S. Martyrii qui et Sahdona quae supersunt omnia* (Parisiis: O. Harrassowitz, 1902), 634.

[18] Ms. ܡܪܝ.

[19] Ms. ܡܢ.

If, therefore, these are miraculous (births), why does the church not celebrate a feast of nativity for all? Instead, it does for Christ alone.

2.5 It is obvious we do not celebrate a feast as we behold the outward appearances. Rather, we look at the abundant richness of His goodness toward us, and the great love with which He overwhelmed our mortal human race. Was it not greater and more excellent the glorious revelation in Mount Sinai as horns and trumpets were proceeding and declaring His greatness?[20] Was it not also more awesome vision that appeared to Ezekiel,[21] where (His greatness) was celebrated on the Chariot of Cherubim of manifold images, and it moves with wheels that were endowed with the power of speech, and their body is filled with discerning eyes? (Were they not greater) than this vision of today, where (Jesus in) Bethlehem was seen by human beings?

2.6 The goods that we received in our first creation are by no means equated with these (goods) that are given to us today. For first, we came to exist from nothing; and from dust we were formed as human. Now, however, we became spiritual from being corporeal; and from being the sons of Adam we have been born as sons of God. And from an inheritance of the land that produces thorns, now He prepared for us the heavenly Jerusalem, filled with blessings. We were saved from error, and we were illuminated by the light of his revelation just as it is written: "People who dwelt in the darkness saw great light."[22] Therefore, when we look at these good gifts, which were given to us today, we will diligently celebrate this feast, as we hope to be worthy of receiving them in the final appearance of Christ.

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[20] Cf. Ex 19:16–19.

[21] Cf. Ezek 1:4–28.

[22] Cf. Mt 4:16; cf. 1 Sam 9:1.

ܐܝ ܗܘܠܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܘܐܬܝܢ. ܡܢܘܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܚܒܐ ܟܠܐ ܟܐܘܐ ܘܡܢܝ
ܘܦܪܘܢ. ܐܠܐ ܒܥܡܫܐ ܟܬܘܒܐ.

2.5 ܐܠܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܘ ܕܟܬ ܕܒ ܫܢܝܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܬܝܕܐ ܟܐܘܐ. ܐܠܐ ܕܒ
ܫܢܝܢ ܕܡܐܘܐ[23] ܥܡܕܐ[24] ܘܢܦܩܘܢ: ܡܢܕܐ ܕܐܬ ܒܐܪܥܐ ܟܠ
ܡܢ ܕܥܡܐ. ܠܐ ܢܫܬ ܕܐܬ ܠܘܬ ܥܡܟܬܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ
ܒܟܠܗܘܢ ܒܫܢܬ ܠܘܬ: ܕܒ ܡܢܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ ܕܥܒܕܘ ܡܕܥܒܕܐ ܕܡܢ
ܟܠ ܐܬܪܐ. ܗܘܐ ܕܠܐ ܒܫܠܐ ܠܘܬ ܒܥܐ ܘܡܢ ܐܝܬܝܡܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ. ܕܒ
ܟܠ ܡܢܡܚܐ ܐܬܪܬܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ ܡܪܝܫܐ ܕܡܢܘܢ: ܠܘܬ ܕܡܬܝܠܐ ܡܟܬܒܐ
ܐܒܠܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ ܟܬܒ ܒܡܫܐ ܕܡܢܡܚܐ: ܐܦ ܗܘܐ ܫܘܐ ܘܡܥܒܕ ܕܡ
ܕܡܢ ܐܝܬܝܡܐ ܟܬܒܬܐ.

2.6 ܐܠܐ ܟܬ ܡܬܬܒܐ ܐܒܥܝܢ ܕܒܡܬܐ: ܡܢܝ ܟܡ ܗܘܟ ܘܡܥܒܕ
ܐܝܬܝܡ[25] ܟ. ܡܢ ܡܢܡ ܟܬ. ܡܢ ܠܐ ܡܢܡ ܟܬܘܒܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ. ܘܡܢ ܟܬܒ
ܟܬܒܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ. ܥܒܕܐ ܒܗ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܒܐ ܘܡܫܐ ܘܡܢ. ܘܡܢ ܡܬܒ ܐܘܡ
ܡܬܒ ܐܝܟܘܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ. ܘܡܢ ܫܠܝܬܐ ܒܐܘܢܐ ܘܥܒܕܐ ܡܕܥ. ܗܘܡܟܡ ܘܡܥܒܕ
ܘܥܒܕ ܠܡܕܐ ܠܐ ܟ. ܘܡܢ ܠܥܒܕ ܐܝܬܝܡܐ. ܐܬܘܢܘ ܘܟܬܒܬܐ
ܐܝܬܝܡ ܐܝ ܒܥܡܐ. ܘܟܬ ܘܢܥܒ ܡܬܡܥܬ ܫܐ ܗܘܘ ܒܐ. ܟܬܒ ܕ
ܫܢܝܢ ܡܟܬܒܐ ܗܘܟ ܘܡܥܒܕ ܐܝܬܝܡ[26] ܟ ܡܬܟܬܒ ܥܡܕܐ ܟܐܘ ܗܘ.
ܕܒ ܡܥܡܕܢ: ܘܢܥܒܕ ܘܢܥܒ ܐܬܝ ܡܡ ܡܥܒܕܘܗ ܐܝܬܝܡ
ܒܥܡܫܐ.

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[23] Ms. ܐܘܐ.

[24] It was written as ܥܡܕܐ but the letter ܬ was added later on top of the word to be read correctly as ܥܡܬܐ.

[25] The conventional way of writing 3 feminine plural in perfect tense is ܡܬܬܒܐ.

[26] The conventional way of writing 3 feminine plural in perfect tense is ܡܬܬܒܐ.

THIRD CHAPTER
[WHAT ARE THE GOOD GIFTS BESTOWED UPON US BY THE NATIVITY]

3.1 Because of the good gifts that were bestowed upon us in this day, we take care to celebrate in joy; this has been demonstrated by what has been said. Let us see what these good gifts (fol. 12r) that were bestowed upon us are.

3.2 When the celestial powers sensed these (gifts) beforehand, they became filled with joy and wonder; they rushed to announce the good tidings. Some of them ran to Holy Mary and to Joseph the Just, her betrothed, to inform them about the overshadowing[27] of His Power and the coming of the Holy Spirit so that they should not doubt.[28] Another was announcing to the shepherds: "Today a Savior was born unto you."[29] Another was leading the Magi by means of the vision of the star, while they were carrying mysterious gifts from a far place to worship the glorious babe. Some others were setting up choirs, cheering and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and a good hope for the people."[30] For the holy angels are as our peers in creation so they are saddened at our perdition and they rejoice in our salvation.

3.3 And just as when a member of our body loses its healthy function, and decays, it is cut off and thrown away from the company of our members; this is just as the word of the Lord.[31]

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[27] Lit. tabernacle; this noun and its subsequence derivations are exclusively used for the divine. S. Brock has made this point in several of his articles; see S. Brock, "Maggnânûtâ: A Technical Term in East Syrian Spirituality and its Background," in *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont. Contributions à l'étude des christianismes orientaux*. Cahiers d'Orientalisme 20, (Genève: Patrick Cramer, 1988), 121–129; see also, "'Syriac Dialogue' – An Example from the Past," *The Harp* 15 (2002): 313–315.

[28] Cf. Lk 1:35.

[29] Lk 2:11.

[30] Lk 2:14.

[31] Cf. Mt 5:29–30.

ܡܠܐܡܐ ܓ[32]
[ܐܡܟܝܢ ܐܢܬܬܝܗܘܢ ܘܐܡܪܝܢ ܠܟ]

3.1 ܘܡܢ ܬܟܠܐ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ[33] ܠܟ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܗܘ: ܡܪܝܡܬ ܠܟܡܪܝܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ. ܐܝܬܝܗ ܡܘܟܝܢ ܘܐܡܪܝܢ:[34] ܬܪܝܢ ܟܝܢ ܘܐܡܟܝܢ ܐܢܬ ܠܟܬܐ (ܘܠܐ 12 ܕ) ܘܐܡܪܝܢ[35] ܠܟ.

3.2 ܗܘܝܢ ܒܟ ܡܬܟܘܠܐ ܬܘܟܠܐ ܕܒܗܘ ܐܘܟܝܡܘ ܡܢܗ ܡܘܠܐ ܘܐܡܪܘ ܐܝܡܟܝ. ܟܡܬܘܠܐ ܕܗܘ ܗܘ. ܘܡܫܬܘܢ ܡܢ ܟܘ ܟܦܝܡܬܐ ܡܢܡܪ: ܕܟܬܘܡܬ ܕܐܝ ܡܟܝܢܐ: ܟܠ ܡܟܝܢܐ ܘܡܟܘܟܘ ܡܬܠܐܐ ܘܢܡܐ ܕܒܝܡܐ ܡܕܝܚܝ ܗܘ. ܐܡܕܐ ܒܝܠܐ ܬܡܐ ܬܘܘܢ. ܐܢܕܐ ܒܝ ܟܬܘܟܐ ܘܐܡܟܝ ܟܡ ܡܕܡܐ ܦܘܢܐ ܡܡܟܝ ܗܘ. ܐܢܕܐ ܟܡܐ ܘܦܘܡܟ ܟܬܝܟܐ ܡܢ ܐܝܐ ܕܢܡܐ: ܟܡܝܐ ܘܟܐ ܡܟܝܐ. ܒܕ ܠܡܟܝ[36] ܡܢܬܟ ܕܐܘܕ ܒܝ ܗܘ. ܐܢܕܐ ܟܝܬܐ ܡܡܡܟ ܗܘ. ܡܕܟܡ ܗܘ ܐܘܡܢܝ: ܐܡܟܡܐ ܠܐܟܘܐ ܟܡܬܘܡܐ. ܘܟܠܐܘܐ ܡܟܘ. ܘܡܟܐ ܠܟ ܟܟܬܬܘܐ. ܡܟܠܐ ܟܝܢ ܕܐܝ ܘܟܡܬܐ ܡܬܘܠܐ ܐܡ ܡܠܐܐ ܡܬܝܐ: ܕܢܐ ܟܡܘ ܕܐܒܝܒ. ܘܢܒܝ ܡܡܘܡܐ.

3.3 ܐܠܡܐ ܗܘܠ ܟ ܒ ܡ ܡܢ ܬܘܡܐ ܟܝܢ ܢܦܡ ܡܢ ܡܟܟܘܐ ܕܘܐ ܘܗܘ ܟܡܡܐ: ܡܠܡܡܡ ܘܡܡܐ ܡܢ ܡܐܘܐ ܘܬܘܡܝ ܐܡ ܟܢܐ ܠܐ ܗܘܢܐ: ܗܘܐ ܘܡܠܐܐ ܡܬܝܐ: ܡܢ ܘܡܐ ܘܦܟܝ ܡܢ ܡܟܟܘܐ ܘܘܡܟ ܐܟܬܐ:

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[32] The indication for the third chapter is written on the margin.

[33] The conventional way of writing 3 feminine plural in perfect tense is ܐܝܬܝܗ.

[34] The conventional way of writing 3 feminine plural in perfect tense is ܘܐܡܪܝܢ.

[35] The conventional way of writing 3 feminine plural in perfect tense is ܘܐܡܪܝܢ.

[36] Ms. ܠܟܡ.

In this way, since the holy angels saw us falling from the healthiness of worshiping God, they were overcame by much sadness. Conversely, as they saw that these (gifts) are working for our salvation, they were filled with a great joy. It was, therefore, pleasing to them as healthy members of creation. From God good gifts were revealed to be given to us. For this reason (they cheered): "Glory to God in the highest." Because there was never peace on earth, since it (the earth) fought against God, and served and worshipped gods, who are no gods.[37] For this (reason), since He (God) was angry, it was fitting to sow the earth with peace. Then, along with those who were not angry (angels), it (the earth) glorifies.

3.4 "Good will among human beings" (Lk. 2:14).[38] (It refers) to those who became justified by faith, and became part of God's household and peaceful after being enemies and hostiles. This was heard first for reconciliation.[39] Those (angels) were holding the order, and were prepared to reconcile the churches; it was perfectly

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[37] Cf. Deut 4:28.

[38] Cf. Lk 2:14; the wording of this part of the verse does not conform to the Peshitta. The wording is closer to the Harklean.

[39] The word behind "reconciliation" (ܐܲܪܝܲܚܘܬܐ) is my emendation of the manuscript 17188 based on the reading of Thomas of Edessa. The word in the manuscript is "shepherds" (ܪܘܥܝܬܐ). Apparently, the scribe read it "shepherds" because he confused the following word (ܡܪܚܡ) "to reconcile", with the word (ܪܥܐ) "to shepherd". Thus the whole sentence could be read as: The shepherds heard first… in order to shepherd the churches. The subject of the following sentence, however, reverts back to the angels.

ܚܕܝܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ. ܐܝܟ ܗܘܝܬ ܒܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܒܟܠ
ܡܕܝܢܬܐ. ܫܪܝܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܥܕܢܐ. ܡܢܐ ܗܘܝܬ ܟܕܝܢ ܐܢܬ
ܒܕܪܘܡܐ ܫܬܝܢܐ ܒܝܡܝܐ: ܡܢܝܢܟܝ ܐܦܠܐ ܡܢ ܐܝܟܐ ܕܚܛܝܐ: ܐܝܟ ܕܟ
ܡܢܬܐܝܢ ܐܦܠܐ. ܡܢܝܢ ܗܘܝܐ ܟܝ ܠܐܚܝܡܐ ܕܠܐܝܟܐ ܚܝܬܐܝܐ: ܡܢܝܢ
ܘܡܢ ܟܠܝܢܐ ܐܝܟܐ ܟܝܢ ܐܦܐ: ܚܝ[40] ܡܢܟܝ ܟܝ ܐܝܟܐ: ܠܠܝܟܬܐ ܐܝܟ
ܕܠܐ ܐܝܬܝܢ ܟܬܝܒܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ. ܡܢܝܢ ܗܘܝܐ: ܟܠܐ ܒܝܬ ܐܠܗܐ: ܐܦܐ ܗܘܝܐ
ܕܬܪܘܝܢ ܟܬ. ܡܗܝܡ ܟܝ ܗܘܝ ܕܠܐ ܢܝܡܝ ܐܝܟܐ.

3.4 ܟܝܬܢܐ ܕܚܝܐ ܠܟ: ܐܢܐ ܕܐܪܘܝܐ ܟܐܦܐ: ܡܢ ܟܬܒܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ
ܕܐ ܟܬܠܐ ܕܫܘܬܐ. ܐܢܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܟܠܢܐ[41] ܐܠܐܝܟܝܢ ܡܪܝܢ. ܐܢܐ ܕܠܟ
ܐܝܡܝ ܐܦܐ. ܐܢܐ ܕܚܡܝ ܐܦܐ ܐܢܝ ܟܬܒ. ܡܠܟ

[40] Ms. added ܠܠ.
[41] Ms. ܐܠܗܝܟ.

(Fol. 12v) right for them to do. In the first order, they serve peace on earth, those who were prepared to announce peace to the entire body of the church. And they rejoice in finding the lost sheep.[42] What was then much better and more superior for the peoples than to know God, their creator, with peace?

3.5 Even for the Israelites, although they already had acquaintance with God, they were rewarded with a great benefit by the coming of Christ. They were exalted from the manners of children to become worthy of the perfect knowledge of the Holy Trinity. It is just like when a child is weaned from milk and is brought to real food, his parents rejoice with great joy. Thus, they should greatly rejoice because they were weaned from milk, and along with all peoples are brought to the perfect knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

3.6 Today, if there are some people who still have not believed in Christ, or they have believed but do not complete his commandments, this is not because of Him. For Him, behold, the light of his knowledge is extended to everyone. His banquet of goodness is prepared for everyone. It (his knowledge) criticizes those who disbelieved or those who believed but did not keep his commandments. It is just like one who stands under the sun, but his eyes are blinded so that he cannot see the light. Likewise, it is like one who is invited to the dinner, but he keeps his legs from going.

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[42] Evidently, although Moshe Bar Kepha draws most of the ideas and even some exact phrases from Thomas of Edessa, most of the ideas of the commentary on the angels' song are found in Jacob of Sarugh's (d. 521) homily on Nativity. See Barsum Ayub, مواعظ القديس مار يعقوب السروجي الملفان [Homilies of St. Jacob of Sarugh] (Beirut: Tuma Press, 1991), 18; the Syriac text was edited by S. Brock.

(ܡܠܐ 12 ܚ) ܩܕܡܝܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܡܢ ܒܟܠܗܝܢ ܥܡܡܐ ܬܚܬܝܢ
ܟܠܗܘܢ ܩܒܘܡܐ: ܡܢܝ ܒܕܡܝܢ ܡܕܝ ܒܥܡܡܐ ܬܚܬܝܢ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ
ܒܟܠܗ: ܡܢܝܢ ܠܐ ܥܨܝܡܐ ܒܚܝܐ ܒܟܠܗ. ܡܢܐ ܢܝܢ ܐܢܐ ܡܢܐ ܒܟܠ
ܟܬܘܒܐ ܩܕܡܝܢ ܡܫܬܟܚ: ܗܝ ܡܢ ܒܬܒܝܢ ܠܠܟܘܢ ܟܬܡܝܢ ܥܡ ܥܡܡܐ.

3.5 ܐܝ ܟܬܒܐ ܢܝܢ ܐܢܫܬܟܚ ܐܦ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܐܢܐ ܡܢ ܕܐܝ ܕܝܢ ܐܬܟܘܢ. ܗܠܐ
ܠܚܕܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܐܝܬܝܢ ܕܐܝ ܕܝܢ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܒܡܫܝܚܐ. ܕܗܠܝܢ ܗܝ ܡܬܟܚ
ܡܫܬܟܚ. ܕܐܝܬܝܢ ܕܒܝܬܐ ܢܝܢܘܐ ܕܐܝܬܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ. ܐܦܠ ܡܬܝ
ܡܬܟܝܐ ܐܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܗܝ ܫܪܝܐ ܕܐܝܬܘܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܘܐ ܕܐܝܬܘܬ: ܫܘܝܐ
ܫܘܝܐ ܐܦܠ ܠܐܬܘܬܐ. ܡܬܠ ܕܒܘܬܐ ܕܐܝ ܒܬܒܝ: ܕܐܝܬܘܬ ܗܝ ܫܪܝܐ:
ܡܢܝ ܕܝܢ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܒܝܬܐ ܢܝܢܘܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܝܬܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ.

3.6 ܐܝ ܕܝ ܐܢܐ ܐܬܝ ܡܐ ܕܒܝܬܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܬܘ ܟܬܝܒܐ: ܐܘ ܒܡܫܬܘ ܠܐ
ܡܫܬܟܚ ܡܩܒܠܘܢ. ܡܕܐ ܠܐ ܐܦ ܡܢܘ ܐܢܐ. ܒܟܘ ܕܝ ܐܦ ܡܐ ܕܢܝܢ ܐܦܘ
ܒܒܝܬܗ ܟܬܝܒܘ. ܡܫܝܚܐ ܥܡܡܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܟܬܝܒܘ. ܡܫܝܚܝܐ
ܢܝܢ ܠܐܟܝ ܕܠܐ ܡܫܬܘ: ܐܘ ܡܫܬܘ ܠܐ ܢܫܝܢ ܡܩܒܠܘܢ. ܐܝܟ ܐܝܬ ܕܡܐ
ܐܝܬ ܡܫܝܚ ܡܫܝܚܐ. ܡܫܝܚ ܟܬܝܒܘ ܠܐ ܢܫܝ ܐܦܘ. ܐܝܟ ܐܝܬ ܕܡܪܝܡ
ܟܬܝܒܐ: ܡܠܐ ܕܝܢ ܟܬܝܒܘ ܗܝ ܕܟܬܝܒ. ـ

FOURTH CHAPTER
[CONCERNING THE PEACE GIVEN BY THE ANGEL TO THE HOLY VIRGIN]

4.1 Having demonstrated the gifts that we were endowed with by means of the manifestation of our God, we will say a word concerning the peace that was given by the angel to the Holy Virgin.

4.2 We observe, just as we said above, the angels proclaimed (peace) to the earth, since for this reason He (Christ) came to the nativity. (He came) to reconcile the heavenly beings with the earthly beings, and to announce peace for those who are far away or close. It is customary that peace is given first. As when peace is announced, everyone will know that the king of peace is about to come. It is just as concerning the house in which the king will dwell is cleansed first, (Fol. 13r) sanctified, and decorated with beautiful decorations, in order to befit the king; and then the king enters and dwells in it. It is likewise concerning the Holy Virgin; since the King of Peace was prepared to dwell in her, it was befitting for her to hear the adorning peace of the (heavenly) acquaintances, and become purified first. Then the King will dwell (in her).[43]

[43] Moshe Bar Kepha uses two christological motifs of the Church of the East, albeit with different intention: first, the motif of "dwelling place" in and from Mary, which originated in the writing of Theodore Mopsuestia (d. 428) as "dwelling place" (ܟܘܢܐ) and as "temple" (ܗܝܟܠܐ); second, the motif of the King (who puts on purple clothes). See J. Vosté, ed., *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis Apostoli* CSCO 115–116, Syr. 62–63 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1940), 33–34, (tr.), 22–23; and see Narsai's homily in S. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East," 170.

ܡܠܐܝ ܕ[44]
[ܫܬܝܐ ܕܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܕܐܡܬܐ ܥܠܝܐ: ܡܢ ܩܠܝܐ ܕܟܪܝܣܛܝܢܐ ܥܡܡܐ.]

4.1 ܟܠܗ ܕܝܢ ܕܥܡܡܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܐܢܬ ܠܚܝܐ: ܕܐܡܪܝܢ[45] ܠܟ ܡܪܝ ܫܡܝܢܘܢܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܗܘܐ ܫܬܝܐ ܕܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܕܐܡܬܐ ܥܠܝܐ: ܡܢ ܩܠܝܐ ܕܟܪܝܣܛܝܢܐ ܥܡܡܐ.

4.2 ܡܬܡܪ ܕܝܢ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܬܝ ܡܢ ܟܬܒܐ. ܕܟܬܒܐ ܐܘܕܥ ܥܕܬܐ ܐܪܥܐ ܩܠܝܐ. ܫܠܝܐ ܕܝܢ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܐܝܠ ܠܘ ܟܬܒܐ: ܕܥܡܝ ܟܬܝܒܐ ܠܟ ܐܬܝܠܐ: ܘܡܢ ܥܡܐ ܕܟܬܝܒܐ ܕܟܬܝܒܐ. ܕܥܡܐ ܕܟܬܝܒܐ ܫܡܝܢܐ ܩܒܘܪܐ. ܐܡܪܐ ܕܩ ܥܡܐ ܫܡܝܢ: ܬܪܝܢ ܩܝܡܐ ܕܩܝܡ ܕܥܡܐ ܕܟܡ ܕܠܐ. ܐܝܟ ܥܕܝ ܕܝܢ ܐܢܐ ܕܩܝܡ ܕܟܡ ܕܢܢ: ܩܡ ܫܡܝܢܐ (ܕܟ 13 ܀) ܘܫܡܝܢ ܘܫܪܝܟܐ ܕܪܝܫܐ ܫܢܝܐ: ܐܡܪܐ ܕܝܢ ܕܘܫܢ ܟܬܝܐ ܬܘܠ: ܘܡܝ ܩܬܝܐ ܕܠܐ ܘܢ. ܕܩܪܐ ܕܟܡ ܕܩܝܡ ܕܟܡ ܕܢ ܩܬܝܐ ܕܢ: ܕܝ ܕܘ ܕܥܡܐ ܕܪܝܫܐ ܕܬܢܐ: ܘܐܝܬ ܩܬܝܐ: ܘܡܝ ܩܬܝܐ ܕܢ.

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[44] The indication for the fourth chapter is written on the margin.

[45] As a feminine plural verb in the past, it should be written as ܕܐܡܪܬܝ.

4.3 Concerning this peace, God had commanded Moses: "When you go into battle against your enemies, announce peace to them. If they respond with peace, and they open for you, do not destroy any living beings of them. If not, besiege them and destroy them."[46] In this way, also Christ, who came to reconcile the enemies, announced peace unto them. Those who accept the peace live; and those who reject it perish. And unto His holy apostles, those who were prepared to preach His good news, He commanded them to give peace first.[47]

4.4 Why was it necessary to send an angel before Him, and then He would come? It is as the earthly king who, when he prepares to go to a certain place or city, sends emissaries before him in advance in order to announce the coming of the king, in order to prepare the things that befit the king. It was also likewise for God the Word who, when He prepared to come unto us sent in advance emissaries before Him in order that we may be prepared when the Word comes to dwell (to tabernacle) in us.[48] The Holy Virgin heard the word of the archangel Gabriel: "Peace unto you, full of grace… the Lord be with you."[49] This peace was an indicator of a marvelous deed. He [the angel] added immediately, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name him Jesus,"[50] which is interpreted as savior, not only for a single people but the entire (creation) under heaven.

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[46] Cf. Deut 20:10–12; however, the wording significantly differs from the Peshitta.

[47] Cf. Lk 10:5.

[48] Cf. Jn 1:14. The Peshitta and subsequent Syriac literature use the expression "in us," rather than "among us," as it is in English translations. Still Moshe Bar Kepha uses the Peshitta verb of ܫܪܐ which implies divine dwelling or "to tabernacle." See S. Brock, "Maggnânûtâ: A Technical Term," 121–129.

[49] Cf. Lk 1:28. The first part is a quotation from the Peshitta, the second part is a quotation from the Harklean Version. See Juckel and Kiraz, p. 11.

[50] Cf. Lk 1:31. It is a paraphrase of the verse, but closer in wording to the Harklean than to the Peshitta. Cf. Juckel and Kiraz, 12.

4.3 ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢܝܢ ܡܢܘ ܐܢܬܘܢ. ܗܐ ܒܐܪܥܐ ܕܡܨܪܝܢ ܠܟܘܢ
ܡܬܩܝܡܝܢ ܠܟܘܢ ܘܡܬܓܪܝܢܘܢ: ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܬܝܠܝܢ ܠܟܘܢ. ܐܝ ܒܝܬ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܟܘܢ
ܐܬܩܝܡܘ ܠܟܘ: ܠܐ ܐܦܝܠܘ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܥܒܕܐ. ܗܘܝ ܒܝ ܠܐ: ܐܝܟܐ ܐܢܐ
ܐܫܬܘܕܥ ܐܢܐ. ܘܟܬܒܘ ܐܦ ܥܠܡܐ ܒܐܝܠܐ ܕܟܬܒܝܢܐ ܕܡܬܓܪܝܢܐ: ܠܟܘܢ
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܬܝܠܝܢ. ܒܐܝܟܝ ܒܥܠܝܢ ܕܠܟܘܢ ܫܠܡ. ܗܐܝܟܝ ܒܠܐ ܥܠܝܢ ܐܢܢ
ܘܟܠܟܫܝܫܘܢ ܡܬܝܢܐ ܥܠܝܟ ܒܐܡܬܐ ܘܥܕܢܐܘ ܡܬܩܢܐ. ܠܟܘܢ ܕܦܒ
ܐܢܐ ܒܢܐܟܝ ܡܒܥܝܢ.

4.4 ܘܥܕܐ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟܝ ܘܥܠܐ ܒܡܒܘܪܐ ܡܒܥܘܪܘܬ: ܘܥܒܝܕ ܘܦ ܫܠܝܐ. ܐܝܢܐ
ܥܠܝܠ ܒܕܟܐ ܐܙܝܢܐ: ܗܐ ܒܐܡܪ ܒܫܐܪ ܠܐܢܐ ܐܝ ܟܬܒܝܢܐ ܐܢܐ ܒܝܘ:
ܐܬܟܝܐ ܦܡ ܡܒܥܝ ܡܒܥܘܪܘܬ: ܒܬܪܘܢ ܒܐܝܠܐ ܟܕ ܕܟܐ. ܐܥܕܐ ܒܠܚܝܢ
ܥܠܝܟ ܒܟܕܟܐ ܟܬܝܥܐ: ܥܕܐ ܐܦ ܐܟܕܐ ܥܕܝܠܐ: ܒܝ ܡܐܡ ܘܥܕ ܒܫܐܪ
ܝܐܝܒ: ܒܝܡ ܒܝܢ ܐܬܟܝܐ ܡܒܥܘܪܘܬ. ܐܥܕܐ ܒܫܝ ܕܠܚܐ ܬܘܕܐ: ܗܐ ܒܐܝܠܐ
ܥܠܝܠܐ ܬܘܒܢ ܒܝ. ܕܡܕܐ ܘܥܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܢܐ ܥܠܝܟ ܘܢܡ
ܕܠܐܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܢ. ܥܕܝ ܟܕ ܥܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܢ..ܥܕܝ ܡܬܩܝܡ. ܘܥܕ ܠܟܘܢ
ܒܟܝܐ ܐܡܪܐ ܐܝܟܐ ܘܥܕ ܡܒܥܘܪܘܬ. ܐܡܬܩ ܫܝܢ ܡܫܝܚ. ܘܥܕ ܟܠܗ ܐܝܟ
ܕܒܢܡܝܢ ܘܥܕ ܐܝܟ ܕܢ. ܘܥܕ ܐܝܟ ܡܬܩܝܡ ܬܡܝܢ ܘܡܬܩܝܡ ܒܢܘܡ.
ܘܟܕ ܘܥܕ ܒܢܐ ܕܡܪܝ: ܐܠܐ ܒܘܟܕ ܘܦ ܒܐܡܪ ܡܬܩܝܡ.

4.5 As she was looking at her physical nature, she said: "How this can happen to me since I never knew a man?"[51] And when she was worried about the kind of birth, the angel responded to her and said: "The Holy Spirit will come, and the Power of the Most High will overshadow you."[52] The Power of the Most High is Christ, who (Fol. 13v) tabernacled in the virgin womb for nine months and was born with an exceeding authority, and he did not break the seal of virginity.

FIFTH CHAPTER
[WHY WAS CHRIST BORN IN THE TIME OF THE CENSUS?]

5.1 When he (Luke) said that the time of the birth approached, they went up to register their names in Bethlehem of Judea in accordance with the decree of Caesar Augustus.[53] And when they arrived, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. Therefore, He was born in the time of the census in order to relieve us from earthly slavery and to register us in heaven.[54]

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[51] Cf. Lk 1:34. The first part of the verse is a quotation from the Harklean, the second is a paraphrase of the Peshitta. Cf. Juckel and Kiraz, 12.

[52] Cf. Lk 1:35. The verse is paraphrased from the wordings of the Harklean and Peshitta. Cf. Juckel and Kiraz, 12.

[53] Cf. Lk 2:1–4.

[54] Moshe Bar Kepha draws this comment from Ephrem. For Ephrem said, ܒܝܘܡܝܗܘܢ ܕܡܬܪܫܡܝܢ ܥܡܐ ܠܡܬܪܫܡܘܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܐܓܣܛܘܣ ܒܣܦܪܐ ܕܚܝܐ. "In the days when the emperor enrolled the people for the head-tax, our Savior came down and enrolled the people in the Book of Life." See E. Beck, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Ephiphania)* XVIII, 2, 91. The same notion with different wording is found in Jacob of Sarugh, cf. T. Kollamparampil, *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on the Nativity,* Texts From Christian Late Antiquity, Vol. 23 (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2010), 98–99.

4.5 ܐܦܝܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܡܢܗ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܗܘܝܘ: ܐܡܪܐ ܠܐܝܠܐ ܟܕ ܐܬܝܐ ܘܫܚܪܐ ܠܐ
ܡܚܝܠܐ ܐܝܠ: ܐܦܝ ܥܠܡܐ ܪܒܐ ܘܡܬܐ ܕܠܥܠܡܐ: ܒܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܥܠܗ.
ܘܐܡܐ ܕܐܢܐ ܬܠܬܐ: ܐܡܪܐ ܘܥܠܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܥܠܝܗ. ܡܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܘܥܠܐ ܕܐܡܐ
ܐܠܗܐ ܐܡܝܢ. ܐ (ܘܠܐ 13 ܥ) ܘܦܝ ܐܝܟ ܥܦܪܐ ܥܠܐܥܠܐ: ܐܪܥܐ ܘܥܠܝܐ
ܘܐܡܐ ܡܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ: ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܘܢܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ: ܐܠܐܡܐ ܕܥܠܐܥܠܐ ܠܐ ܒܙܐ.

ܡܠܬܐ ܕ[55]

ܦܝ ܫܢܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܐܝܟܢܐ: ܬܐܦܐ ܐܦܟܝܠ ܡܐ ܪܚܐ ܘܡܫܚܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܡܫܝܚܐ.

5.1 ܦܝ ܕܝܢ ܐܢܐ ܪܚܐ ܘܡܫܚܐ ܡܠܟ ܐܐ: ܡܫܝܚ ܐܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܦܝܪ ܡܫܝܚܐ
ܡܫܝܚ[56] ܚܝܐ ܘܐܐ. ܐܝ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܟ ܡܫܝܚ: ܦܝ ܕܝܢ ܡܠܟܘ:
ܡܫܝܚ ܡܢܝܚ ܫܚܢܐ ܐܢܐ: ܐܦܪܥܐ ܐܦܪܥܐ ܚܝܢܐ. ܐܠܐܦܝܢ ܐܠܐ ܕܐܢܐ ܐܦܝ
ܪܚܐ ܘܡܫܚܠܐ: ܒܫܠܐ ܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܐܙܢܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܡܫܝܚ.

[55] The indication for the fifth chapter is written on the margin.
[56] Ms. without ܥ.

Likewise, He fulfills what is said by the head of the fathers, Jacob:[57] "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler from between his feet, till he comes, the one that is prepared for him, and he is the hope of the peoples."[58] And in order for the evangelist to show that rulers[59] from the Israelites have ceased to exist, and thus that they are under the authority of the Roman Empire, it was fitting to mention the decree of Caesar, and the census.

5.2 He (Luke) said: "But they did not have a room in the lodging place."[60] What a wonder! The one who established the earth could not find a room. Since all of us are in sin, God does not dwell in those who are under sin. Furthermore, he found the human being had become animal-like. Thus, in order (for Christ) to become a form of food for him (the human), he was laid in a manger; in this way, when the human will be transformed from an animal-like manner he (the human) will be elevated to the intellect that is proper for the rational human. Being of high glory, "he was wrapped with swaddling cloths" in order to release us from the swaddling cloths of sin.

5.3 It is not required to investigate the matter more than what has been said. You should not say: "How did the Spirit perform this by means of the Virgin?" For since when nature itself performs (this), nobody is able to explain it, how can anybody speak about the miracles of the Spirit?

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[57] For an insightful explanation of this verse by Ephrem, see L. van Rompay, "The Christian Syriac Tradition of Interpretation," in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Interpretation. Vol. I: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300). Part 1: Antiquity*. Edited by M. Sæbø, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 625; van Rompay, "Antiochene Biblical Interpretation: Greek and Syriac," in *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays*. Edited by Judith Frishman, and Lucas van Rompay. Traditio Exegetica Graeca 5. (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 117–119.

[58] Cf. Gen 49:10; the wording is different from the Peshitta.

[59] Lit. heads.

[60] Cf. Lk 2:7. The wording follows the Harklean Version; see Juckel and Kiraz, p. 27.

ܐܝܬܝܐ ܕܝܗ ܕܥܒܕܐ ܡܢ ܕܐܘܢܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܐܝܟܢܐܝܬ. ܘܠܐ ܢܬܒ ܘܥܠ ܡܢ
ܡܢܘܐ ܕܐܒܕܢܐ ܡܢ ܡܐ ܟܠܡܢܐ: ܟܕܥܐ ܘܠܐܠ ܡܢ ܘܟܐ ܡܬܐ: ܡܢ
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܡܐܡܐ ܘܟܬܐ. ܘܕܢܐ ܐܝܬܝܐ ܕܐܝܟܐ ܕܐܘܟܐ ܕܐܡ ܢܥܐ ܡܢ
ܘܡܢ ܐܬܐܝܐ: ܡܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܐ
ܡܥܫܐ ܡܢܐ ܕܐܒܕܘ ܟܐܡܐ ܕܐܒܕ [ܕܟܬܒܐ ܕܐܝܟ].

5.2 ܐܠ ܟܐ ܡܢ ܡܢ ܕܐܡ ܐܬܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܐ ܕ[61] ܐ ܕܐ ܕ. ܠܐ ܡܬܐ
ܕܐ ܕ ܕ ܕ

5.4 For God the Word appointed the time of April when he would be in the womb because in this same time God created the entire creation. The parallel in time teaches that He is the same, who from the beginning created the world out of nothing. Now, He renews it again by means of conception and birth in flesh. Thus, He is born (fol. 14r) in this time in accordance with the order of the nature that was preordained by God from the beginning just as the affinity and likeness of the deeds.

5.5 Again, in this time the light begins to overcome the darkness.[62] Since the darkness exceeded its course,[63] the plants and the trees are fruitless. Now the seed begins to sprout, and the leaves of all trees fall down. Likewise, all humans can see this in the coming of Christ. The knowledge of the truth had disappeared, and the darkness of ignorance dominated, thus they (human beings) were deprived and stripped of all deeds of righteousness. Christ, however, came and drove them away from the evil darkness of sin.[64]

5.6 The heathens used to celebrate a great feast on this day because the light begins to increase and the darkness to decrease. It was right for those (heathen) to know that the benefit of the sunlight overcoming is the same when it is overthrown. Thus, in both seasons the erring heathens should celebrate feasts. It is just like when the night begins to consume (time) from the daytime; if it (daytime) does not decrease, the course of human beings will be disturbed.

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[62] This has been a common notion for Syriac writers, beginning with St. Ephrem. See Edmund Beck, ed., *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*, CSCO 186, Syr. 82 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1959), 48, 137.

[63] December 25 was the date the Romans marked as the winter solstice. See H. Bradt, *Astronomy Methods: A Physical Approach to Astronomical Observations* (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2004), 69.

[64] Like Thomas of Edessa, Moshe Bar Kepha draws a connection between the date of annunciation and the date of the nativity and its implications.

5.4 ܗܘܢ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܒܫܦܐ ܩܢܘܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܢܚܢܢ: ܡܛܠܬܗ ܗܘ
ܕܐܝܟ ܕܪܚܡܐ ܗܘܐ ܟܝܢܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܟܝܢܝܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ. ܥܡܡܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܢ ܕܪܚܡܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ.
ܕܐܦ ܟܕ ܐܦ ܐܠܗܐܝܬܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܦ ܕܢܥܒܕ ܡܢ ܠܐ ܡܬܡܪ ܟܝܢܝܐ:
ܗܘܥܐ ܡܫܬܒܚ ܠܟܘ ܡܫܒܚܬܐ ܕܟܠܗ ܡܫܒܚܬܐ ܕܟܚܝܡ. ܐܡܝܢ ܕܝ
ܩܘܪܒܢܐ[65] (ܕܐ 14 ܀) ܕܪܚܡܐ ܗܘܐ ܐܝܟ ܠܒܫܘܡ ܕܡܘܠܐ: ܗܘ ܕܝܢܐܝܬܐ ܡܢ
ܐܠܗܐ. ܡܬܘ ܕܥܒܘܢ: ܐܝܟ ܬܡܝܗܐ ܗܘܝܐ ܕܫܘܒܚܐ ܕܫܘܒܚܐ.

5.5 ܘܐܡܪ ܐܡܪܐ ܕܪܚܡܐ ܗܘ ܕܗܘܐ ܡܥܩܬܐ ܚܕܪܐ ܚܫܘܟܐ: ܚܘܢ ܕܫܘܕܐ
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܠܐ: ܘܩܐܡܘ ܡܢܝ ܕܢܬܐ ܕܐܬܟܢܐ ܟܝܪܐ: ܕܐܝ ܕܝܢ ܡܥܩܬܐ
ܚܩܠܐ: ܕܐܬܟܢܐ ܩܕܝܡ ܢܡܘܢ ܠܬܩܢܐ: ܚܕ ܟܝܡܐ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܦ ܚܫܝܟܐ
ܡܟܘܐ ܚܢܢܘܐ ܩܕܝܡ ܚܩܠܐܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ. ܕܒܪܐ ܕܥܢܘܐ ܡܟܠܗܐ ܕܐܦ.
ܡܫܡܥܐ ܕܠܡܚܢ ܐܝܟ ܐܦ. ܟܕ ܟܝܪܐ ܐܦ ܕܡܩܟܝܢ ܡܢ ܩܕܝܡ ܚܛܐ
ܕܥܘܡܐ. ܐܠܐ ܕܡ ܡܥܡܒܐ ܕܠܢܘ ܐܢܐ ܡܢ ܡܫܡܥܐ ܕܒܥܐ ܕܫܠܡܐ.

5.6 ܚܒܝܒ ܐܦܐ ܕܝܢ ܫܬܐ ܚܛܐܐ ܗܘ ܚܕܐ ܕܚܐ. ܚܘܢ ܕܥܢܘ ܐܦ ܐܐ ܕܐܦܐ
ܕܐܘܐ ܚܕܪܐ ܡܫܡܥܐ ܚܕܪܙ. ܕܕܡ ܐܦ ܐܐ ܚܐܝ ܕܝܢ ܚܕܘܟܝ ܕܒܪܝ:
ܕܐܘ ܐܠܕܐ ܕܘܕܐ ܟܕ ܕܐܚ ܡܫܡܥܐ. ܐܦ ܟܕ ܐܦ ܐܐ ܕܐ ܟܕ ܡܐܝ: ܟܕܝܪ
ܟܐܘܐܝܬܐ ܥܩܝܟܐ ܬܚܒܝܪ ܚܕܐ ܫܬܐ ܠܟܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܝܢ ܕܟܕ ܥܕܐ ܚܟܐ
ܚܕܥܕ ܡܢ ܐܡܥܡܐ:

[65] In the Ms., the word looks like ܡܬܚ. However, a close look at the second letter reveals the letter "ܠ", although the scribe neglected to connect the first letter "ܒ", with the second.

In the same manner, when the daytime begins to be longer than the night, if night did not decrease, the world would not stand. For if there were not summer and winter, cold and warm, the rising and setting of the sun, the prolonging and shortening of night and day, human beings would not be able to live.

SIXTH CHAPTER
[HE WAS REVEALED NOT AS BEFORE, IN VARIOUS VISIONS AND IMAGES, BUT HE WAS INCARNATED AND INHOMINATED FOR OUR SAKE]

6.1 It was for this reason the Word of God came to be born in flesh, the One who is beyond time, eternal and not made. For God to be revealed to human beings, He was revealed not as before, in various visions and images, but He was incarnated and inhominated for our sake;[66] and He became a human without change.[67]

6.2 What is the Cause of His incarnation and revelation? The Holy Apostle teaches us, saying: "Since the children participated in blood and flesh, he likewise participated in the same that by means of his death will void (Fol. 14v) the one who holds the power of death, who is Satan. And he released those who were in bondage under him."[68] And concerning this, the Savior Himself said: "I came to the world as the light that everyone who believes in me will not remain in the darkness."[69]

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[66] Cf. Heb 1:1–2.

[67] The term "without change" refers to the christological statement that in the incarnation Christ became fully human and fully divine without change.

[68] Cf. Heb 2:14–15.

[69] Jn 12:46.

ܐܝ ܠܐ ܥܕܠ ܬܪܟܬ: ܡܢܡܢܐ ܠܐ ܡܬܐ ܡܢܐ ܟܬܒܢܐ. ܘܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܡܕܡ ܡܕܡܐ:
ܡܢܢܐ ܡܢܢܐ: ܡܢܢܐ ܡܢܢܐ ܘܡܢܢܐ: ܐܘܡܢܐ ܘܡܢܢܐ ܘܡܢܢܐ ܘܡܢܢܐ
ܐܡܢܢܐ: ܠܐ ܡܪܝܐ ܡܢܐ ܘܫܡ ܡܬܬܢܢܐ.

[ܡܠܐ ٥]
[ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܝ ܟܕ ܐܝܟ ܘܡܢ ܡܢܢ. ܡܬܪܢܐ ܐܡܬܩܢܐ ܡܢܬܟܢܐ.
ܐܠܐ ܒܐ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܐܝܟܬܢܐ ܡܢܢܟܢܐ]

6.1 ܡܢܢܐ ܡܫ ܢܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܐܝܡܢ ܡܬܒܐ ܘܡܢܢ ܡܢܢܐ ܘܐܟܢܐ: ܢܢ ܘܐܝܟ ܡܢ
ܡܬܐ ܡܢ ܐܡܐ: ܐܘܠܐ ܡܢܢܐ ܠܐ ܡܡܐ: ܡܢܢܐ ܘܐܟܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܢܐ ܬܡܐ.
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܝ ܟܕ ܐܝܟ ܘܡܢ ܡܢܢ. ܡܬܪܢܐ ܐܡܬܩܢܐ[70] ܡܢܬܟܢܐ. ܐܠܐ ܒܐ
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܐܝܟܬܢܐ ܡܢܢܟܢܐ: ܢܢܢ ܐ ܒ ܐܢܐ ܘܠܐ ܡܡܟܢ.

6.2 ܢܐܢܐ ܡܬܐ ܘܡܐ ܒܢܡܢܐ ܐܘܡܐ ܕܡܡܐ: ܡܬܡ ܐܬܢܐ ܡܬܢ ܟܕ
ܒܐ ܐܢ. ܡܢܢܐ ܐܬܬܢܐ ܐܡܐ ܐܡܐ ܒܡܐ ܡܢܢ: ܢܢܢ ܒܡܡܐ ܐܡܐ ܐܡܐ
ܡܢ ܡܢܢ. ܐܬܒ ܡܡܐ ܡܢܐ ܡܢܢ (ܘܐ 14 ܒ) ܐܡܡ ܡܡܬܢ
ܘܡܡܐ. ܘܐܝܡܢ ܡܢܢ. ܡܢܐ ܡܢܢ ܐܡܡ ܡܡܬܢ. ܢܢ
ܢ ܡܢ ܡܢܢܢ ܐܢ. ܐܐ ܡܢ ܐ ܐ ܡ ܡ ܡ

6.3 Our nature, which was sick in sin because of the transgression of the commandment given to Adam, was in need of Him (Christ) who will heal and cure it (our nature). The human being, who fell from grace, was longing to find Him (Christ) who will take him by the hand and raise him up. The one who was confined in the darkness was seeking the true light to enlighten him. The one who buried the painting of the royal image with the passion of sin, and lost the glorious beauty of the reasoning, this same one was longing unto the One who is able to renew him again and let him regain his first beauty of his creation. The sheep, who was lost from the rational realm of above, was waiting for the good shepherd, who will go out looking for him;[71] and on the occasion of finding Him, he will cause the heavenly powers to rejoice; and He will count him with those who stayed with grace.

6.4 Since the human nature was in bondage under all these, by whom was he able to be created as a new uncorrupted creation? For this to happen by a creature was impossible. Therefore, it was necessary for Him to come, the one who formed us in His image and His likeness from the beginning; for by His hand we will be molded again and will receive the image and the likeness that we have lost. It is like a certain image when it is painted on wood or on another thing like it, when it is affected by dirt for any reason, its features become corrupted and faded. When someone wants to renew it, it is necessary for the owner of the image to come in order to repaint his likeness over the corrupted image. Likewise we too were created in the image of God, but we tarnished it with sin and corrupted it with iniquity. Thus the splendid image of God was taken from us; it was necessary for Him to come so that he will repaint us again after his image (Fol. 15r) by imperishable and incorruptible paints. It was impossible for this to happen by means of angels or prophets.

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[71] The notion of "the Good Shepherd, who is born today, will seek and find the lost sheep" is discussed by Moshe Bar Kepha in his *Commentary on Luke*, cf. fol. 6r.

6.3 ܗܢܝܢ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܟܝ ܡܠܐܟܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܝ[72] ܡܢܗ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝܬܘܬܐ ܠܡܐ. ܟܕ
ܐܝܟ ܒܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܗܢܐ. ܗܢܝܢ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܐܝܟ ܕܥܒܕܘܗܝ ܒܥܝ
ܡܫܝܚܐ: ܗܘܐ ܒܥܡܩ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܗܢܐ. ܡܢܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ
ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܕܐܝ: ܗܢܐ ܡܢ ܒܥܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ. ܐܦܝܠܘ ܗܢܐ
ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܒܐܪܥܐ ܕܐܝ: ܗܢܐ ܡܢ ܐܪܥܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ. ܐܦܝܠܘ
ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܒܬܚܬ ܐܪܥܐ: ܗܢܐ ܡܢ ܬܚܬ ܐܪܥܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ.
ܐܦܝܠܘ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܒܡܝܐ ܕܐܝ: ܗܢܐ ܡܢ ܡܝܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ:
ܗܢܐ ܠܟ ܒܢܝܢ ܕܐܝ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܝ ܡܢ ܡܠܐܟܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܐܝܟ

6.5 Again, because we sinned we were subjected to death. And of sin, we served an evil and bitter bondage. We disdained the knowledge of God. Moreover, the honor and worship which is due to God, we offered to idols. The divine apostle testifies that these things happened this way.[73] What else? Was it appropriate for God to be silent and still, while his creation, which he made to honor Him, serves and worships another? For if an earthly king, who is a human being, by whose means cities were built and prospered, would not allow (his subjects) to worship and serve others—sometimes he would sent them messages, and sometimes he would send his friends to warn them that he alone should be recognized as their (king); and if they were not convinced by him by these means, he would go to them (in person) so that, by means of being close to them, he could pull them back to himself—how much more was it befitting for God to have compassion on his creatures, who went astray from Him, and who neither accepted the books of the law, nor were convinced by the message of the prophets, that He Himself would come and do (the task). These causes necessitated God the Word to come for our salvation, and not someone else from among His servants.

SEVENTH CHAPTER
[THOSE WHO ARE NOT CONVINCED BY THE MYSTERY OF FAITH]

7.1 Since it was clearly demonstrated that it was necessary for God the Word to come for our salvation rather than one of His servants, let us move toward those who are not convinced by the mystery of faith, saying: "If God the Word was incarnated and born he would be degraded from what he had been; and by means of conception and birth, his divinity would be defiled."

[73] Cf. Acts 7:39–43. The speaker was Stephen; otherwise, Moshe Bar Kepha refers to Luke, the writer of Acts.

6.5 ܐܘܢ ܕܝܢ ܕܢܢ ܒܣܟܠܬܐ ܕܥܕܬܐ ܐܝܟܢܐܝܬ. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܒܥܐ ܕܥܕܢܐ ܥܟܝܬ. ܡܒܪܟܐ ܒܐܟܪܐ ܥܠܝܗ. ܗܐܡܪܐ ܐܡܪܝܢ ܠܠܟܪܐ ܕܐܡܐܢܘܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܟܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܒܝܬ. ܗܘܐ ܕܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܐܝ: ܡܢܐ ܥܡܟ ܥܠܡܐ ܕܟܬܝܒܬܐ ܐܝܟܐ. ܡܢܐ ܥܡܟ ܠܠܟܪܐ ܘܬܥܠܘܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܟܬܝܒܬܐ: ܘܟܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܐܝ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܠܠܟܪܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܢ ܕܠܠܡܐ ܘܡܟ ܟܬܒܐ: ܘܠܠܡܐ ܐܝܟܐ ܡܐܝܟܘܢ: ܐܝ ܟܝ ܡܢ ܡܟܟܐ ܐܘܟܢܐ ܘܟܢܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ: ܠܐ ܡܢܐ ܕܠܠܡܐ ܘܡܟ ܟܬܒܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ: ܠܐ ܡܟܟ ܕܠܠܡܐ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܡܢܟܘܢ: ܐܠܐ ܟܪܟ ܟܝ ܡܬܟܐ ܡܟܝ ܟܐܢ: ܡܟܪ ܟܬܒ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ: ܘܟܐ ܟܐܢ ܕܒܢ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ: ܡܐ ܟܡܟ ܠܐ ܕܡܟܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ. ܡܢ ܐܝ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ. ܐܡܪ ܕܟܬܝܒܬܐ ܟܐܢ ܡܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ: ܡܟ ܟܡ

7.2 These pagans, who are strangers to the truth, when they hear us concerning the causes for which the Son of God came to be born a human, they object to us, saying: "It is absurd even to think that God and the Son of God may come to be born a human, and may be complicated in the processes of birth, and thus the purity that purifies all may be defiled in (fol. 15v) the complication with these human matters."

7.3 First, we would ask them this: "Can absurdity and defilement be found in good or in bad, and is it seen in bad?" Immediately, they unwillingly answered what is true. For they say that absurdity and defilement is found in bad, while there is nothing absurd in the good.

7.4 We ask them: "Are conception, birth and upbringing bad or good?" If they would say they are bad, then why were they ordained by God, who never does anything bad, but rather He is the source of all good? If, however, they are God's creation, and the divine Scripture says: "God saw all that he made, and behold, it is very good,"[74] and everything that God created is good, and also, the intention is good,[75] and the Scripture testifies to all of these, how then would He think about conception, birth, and upbringing as evil deeds? If the conception and birth were evil, why do we not blame those who do it, as we blame those who do bad things? Why do we not convict and punish them as evildoers? Furthermore, if birth is bad, why then are the barren ones distressed when they are not able to give birth?[76] Instead, those who give birth rejoice, and they pray to become worthy of giving birth. For nobody prays to be worthy of evil. Now, if from these and similar (examples) birth is known to be good, and there is no absurdity in good, therefore there is no absurdity in the coming of the Son of God, who is above all, to the human birth by means of his body. On the contrary, it is very proper and good.

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[74] Gen 1:30.

[75] It reads: ܡܬܪܥܝܐ ܗܘ ܛܒܐ. Lit. "the thought of the general is good."

[76] Lit. if they are not qualified to the degree of giving birth.

7.2 ܫܢܝܐ ܕܝܢ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܟܬܒܘܗܝ: ܡܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܐ ܩܕܡ ܬܪܥܐ ܕܫܠܝܛܐ ܥܠ
ܟܠ ܕܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܐܝܠܐ ܬܪܥܐ ܐܢܫܐ ܫܠܝܛܝܢ ܟܡܐܬܝܟ ܒܗ ܐܡܪܝܢ. ܘܡܢܝ ܡܬܝܢ
ܕܢܢܐ: ܕܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܕܟܠ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ: ܟܕܐ ܪܥܐ ܐܢܫܐ ܪܐܝܐ: ܡܚܡܬܝ ܕܢܦܩ ܬܪܥܐ
ܬܡܪܬܝܟ: ܡܐܪܝܐ ܡܢ ܕܡܝܐ ܡܪܝܡܐ ܩܠ: (ܕܐ 15 ܒ) ܒܡܕܝܢܐ
ܕܡܬܝܢ ܐܢܫܐ.

7.3 ܩܪܝܢܐ ܡܬܠ ܬܠܬܐܝܢ ܡܬܐ. ܕܡܬܢܝܐ ܡܢܝܐ: ܒܝܬܐ ܐܝܟܡܐ ܕܐ
ܩܪܝܐ ܕܐܡܪܐ: ܐܝ ܒܝܬܐ ܡܢ ܡܢܝ ܒܝܬܐ ܩܡܝܐ. ܩܝܡ ܡܩܝܡ
ܩܡܝܐ ܐܝܡ ܕܐܡܪ ܡܢ ܡܢܝ ܕܢܦܩ ܐܢܫ ܕܠܐ ܢܚܝ. ܐܡܪܝ ܕܝܢ. ܕܡܬܢܝܐ ܡܢܝܐ
ܒܝܬܐ ܩܡܝܐ. ܒܝܬܐ ܕܐ ܒܝ ܟܡ ܡܢ ܩܝܡ ܕܡܬܝܢ ܕܡܬܝ.

7.4 ܡܠܟܘܬܐ. ܘܟܠܗ ܡܬܐ ܡܐܘܡܐ: ܒܝܬܐ ܐܝܡ ܐܘ ܒܝܬܐ. ܐܝ ܕܝ ܡܐܡܪ
ܘܒܝܬܐ ܐܝܡ. ܐܡܪ ܩܝ ܐܝܟܘܐ ܐܝܡܪܝ: ܡܢ ܘܠܐ ܡܪܝܡ ܪܚܡ ܒܝܬܐ: ܐܠܐ
ܡܪܝܡ ܡܢ ܘܟܬܘ ܒܝܬܐ. ܐܝ ܕܝ ܪܚܝ ܐܝܡ ܕܐܝܬܘܗܝ: ܬܡܝܐ ܐܝܟܘܗ ܐܡܪ:
ܕܝܢ ܐܝܟܘܗ ܟܠ ܕܝܬ. ܡܢ ܒܝ ܐܝܬ ܕܢܦܩ: ܡܟܠ ܕܝܢ ܐܝܟܘܗ[77] ܩܪܝ: ܡܢ:
ܡܪܝܬ ܕܟܬܒ ܡܢ ܩܪܝ. ܡܢܝ ܟܠ ܡܟܝ ܡܪܝ.[78] ܐܡܪ ܟܬܒ
ܬܡܬܝ ܡܐܘܡܐ ܪܝܥܐ ܬܪܥ ܬܡܪܬ. ܐܝ ܩܝ ܪܝܥ ܡܢ ܟܬܒ ܡܬܝ: ܟܬܒ ܠܐ
ܪܝܟܝܢ ܠܐܟܝ ܕܡܬܡܪܝ ܟܝ: ܐܢ ܡܐ ܕܪܝܟܝܢ ܠܐܟܝ ܕܩܪܝ ܪܝܥܐ.
ܡܟܬܒ ܠܐ ܟܘܢܝ ܟܬܝܡ ܡܩܡ ܪܝܡܐ: ܐܢ ܕܟܠ ܟܘܒܐ. ܡܟܬܒ ܪܝܥܐ.
ܡܟܬܒ ܠܝܬ ܐܝ ܪܝܥ ܡܢ ܬܡܝ ܡܠܝܡܪ ܟܝܬ ܐܠܐ ܩܡܝܡ ܕܡܡܪ
ܟܘܢ ܬܡܝ: ܡܢܪ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܪ: ܬܡܪܝܟ ܕܡܡܪ ܟܬܒܘܬܐ. ܠܐ ܩܝ
ܐܝܬ ܡܪܝܐ ܕܡܬܝ ܒܝܬܐ ܐܝ ܩܝ ܩܝ ܡܢ ܡܝܐ ܬܪܝܢ: ܩܡܝܢ ܩܡܝ ܕܐ
ܡܢ ܬܡܝ: ܬܝܡܐ ܕܟܠ ܐܝܬ ܐܝ ܡܢ ܡܢܝ ܐܝ ܕܐ. ܡܢ ܐܝ ܐܠܐ ܡܢ ܕܐ ܕܐ
ܡܢ ܬܡܝ: ܬܝܡܐ ܕܟܠ ܐܝ ܡܢ ܡܢܝ ܐܝ ܕܐ. ܐܝ ܐܝ ܐ ܕ ܡܢ ܡܢ
ܡܝܐ ܐܝ ܕܐ.

[77] Ms. ܐܝܟܘܗ.

[78] Ms. ܡܝܐ.

7.5 For God, it is proper to do every good. Even if someone would say that these, conception and birth, are defilement, it is impossible for the Word of God to be defiled by conception and birth. For God, indeed, is and dwells in all of these, just as it is written: "The heavens and earth are filled with me, says the Lord."[79] And He never became defiled by means of inhabiting it all (fol. 16r) through the defilement that relates to its various parts. If He is not defiled by inhabiting all these (creations), how can we even think that by inhabiting the virgin womb He may be defiled?

7.6 If in this sun that is seen as a great light, being composed of purity and transparency and far removed from impurity, impurity cannot defile its brightness when it penetrates gloomy objects and darkness; and it (brightness) does not become dark or gloomy because of their interaction with them. When its light shines in the darkness, its light cannot be affected or defiled by the darkness. When its hot fume heats cold objects, the coldness cannot affect it (the sun). Now if the sun, being a created thing, cannot be defiled by things that defile, how much more is it impossible for the defilement to touch the creator of the sun? For God the Word stays in His holiness, as his body remains pure and holy, in his union by nature and hypostasis,[80] just as the sun stays in its brightness when it shines over dark objects.

7.7 And if a fire, which was made at a certain time, when it contacts cold, black iron, does not turn black or become smooth ore, (but) instead, it (the fire) draws it (the iron) unto its shining brightness and heat. And when it (fire) is mixed with a black coal, it transforms its color with its brightness and its heat as long as it is able to shine and burn. If fire's pure nature cannot be defiled with any defilement, it is impossible for God the Word, being the source of goodness, to be defiled. These (explanations) are sufficient.

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[79] Jer 23:24.

[80] As usual, here also Moshe Bar Kepha carefully crafts his wording of "union" (ܚܘܝܐ) by nature and hypostasis (ܒܩܢܘܡܐ ܘܒܦܓܪܐ) without stating the technical term of either christological doctrine, namely, Miaphysite or Dyophysite. His purpose is to make his writings appeal to all Christian readers.

7.5 ܠܐܟܘܠ ܡܢ ܩܠܐ ܠܚܡܐ ܩܐܡܐ ܟܬܒܟܒ: ܐܘܠܐ ܡܢ ܕܝ ܒܝܬܐ ܕܢܥ
ܒܥܟܡ ܒܟܠܐ ܥܡܐ ܥܟܝܩܥܡܐ ܕܝܬܝ. ܟܪܝܐ ܒܥܟܡܐ ܕܝܟܘܐ: ܟܒ ܟܠܐ
ܥܡܐ ܡܠܝܩܥ. ܐܝ ܡܢ ܟܬܟܘ ܘܐ ܩܠܐܡܘܢ ܐܟܘܐ ܥܟܦܢ ܐܡ
ܕܥܡܢ. ܕܥܩܐ ܥܐܕܐ ܫܢ ܥܟܡ ܐܦ ܥܢܐ. ܘܠܐ ܫܡܠܝܩܥ ܟܡܥܢܘ
(ܘܐ 16 ؟) ܕܟܩܠ: ܫܟܠ ܕܥܟܠܥܐܐ ܕܥܡܐ ܟܡܬܬܘܠܐ ܘܘܐ ܩܠ.
ܘܠ ܟܡܥܢܐ ܕܟܩܠ ܠܐ ܫܡܠܝܩܥ: ܐܡܐ ܟܪܝܐ ܕܢܢܐ ܕܟܡܥܢܘ ܕܟܩܢܐ
ܟܡܥܟܡܐ ܢܡܠܝܩܥ.

7.6 ܘܠ ܥܡܠ ܟܩܡܐ ܥܐ ܕܫܡܫܐ ܢܥܢܐ ܕܐ: ܟܥܢ ܕܩܡܐ ܥܕܥܡܐ
ܕܕܣܡܐ ܫܟ ܕܘܐ ܒܟܡܐ ܟܡܢܫ: ܘܐ ܟܪܝܐ ܕܘܐ ܕܐܘܠܡ ܟܡܥܢܘܐ: ܟܒ
ܢܟܢ ܟܠ ܟܩܡܐ ܟܩܡܐ ܥܩܡܐ: ܘܐ ܢܟܠ ܐ ܣܩܒ ܫܟܠ
ܩܡܐܥܡܐ ܕܟܡܡ: ܥܟ ܡܥܥܘܐ ܟܣܡܐ ܟܣܐ: ܕܢܩܐ ܡܡܥܘ ܐ
ܬܟܠܐ ܫܟ ܣܡܐ ܘܐ ܟܪܝܐ: ܥܟ ܟܟܝܟ ܕܣܡܡܡܐ ܟܡܣ ܟܥܟܟ
ܕܟܢܢ: ܟܥ ܟܢܢܐ ܕܐܢܢ ܘܐ ܟܪܝܐ: ܥܟ ܟܟܝ ܐܟܡܡ ܘܐ ܫܟܠܐ
ܫܟ ܐܟܟ ܕܟܩܠܩ. ܣܒ ܟܡ ܟܟܥܘ ܕܘܐ ܫܡܡ: ܘܐ ܟܪܝܐ ܘܐ ܫܡܡ
ܕܐܠܟܡܡ ܐܢܢ ܟܥ. ܡܩܩܐ ܡܢ ܫܟܡ ܐܟܘܐ ܟܩܒܡܡܐ: ܟܒ
ܟܟܩܢ ܕܟ ܡܟ ܡܟܩ ܟܡܒܐ ܟܡܡ ܟܡܡ ܟܡܡ ܟܟܘܐ: ܐܡ
ܕܩܡܐ ܫܡܡ ܟܡܡ: ܟܒ ܟܡܟ ܐ ܟܡܩܡ.

7.7 ܘܠ ܥܡܠ ܕܕܕ ܕܟܢ ܐ: ܟܒ ܫܡܐ ܟܡ ܟܩܢܐ ܟܢ ܟ ܟ: ܐ
ܐܡܐ ܟܩܡ ܐ ܕܟ: ܐ ܐ ܟ ܟ ܟ

EIGHTH CHAPTER
[WHY DID NOT THE FATHER OR THE SPIRIT COME FOR OUR SALVATION BUT GOD THE WORD?]

8.1 Now we come to another doubt with which some people oppose us. For they say: Why did not the Father or the Spirit come for the salvation of human beings but rather God the Word?

8.2 All that was done for us in the divine economy[81] is of the whole Trinity. We should not think that some of them (the deeds) were done by the Father, and some of them by the Son, and some of them by the Holy Spirit. Instead, since the three of them are One and the same nature, will, and power, likewise the deed (is one).[82] Christ confirms this, saying: (Fol. 16v) "My Father works until now, also I am working."[83] And in order not to think that the Father does some things and the Son does different things, but rather He (Christ) does the same things on equal level, He adds: "For whatever the Father does, the Son also does these like Him."[84] And in order to show that he works on equal level just as the Father, He said: "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, likewise the Son gives life to whom he will."[85]

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[81] The Syriac word for "economy," ܡܕܒܪܢܘܬܐ stands for the Greek οικονομια. It can be taken as denoting the Incarnation and connoting the entire Christian economy of salvation.

[82] Moshe Bar Kepha argues the oneness of the Holy Trinity as a common doctrine of all Christians. A similar argument was made by Theodore Bar Kōnī in his response to his Muslim interlocutor, who rejected the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. See Addai Scher, *Theodorus Bar* Kōnī *Liber Scholiorum*, CSCO vol. 69 (Paris, 1912), 278.

[83] Jn 5:17.

[84] Jn 5:19.

[85] Jn 5:21.

[ܡܠܐܟܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܥܡܐ ܕܐܠܗ ܚܝܘܬܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܥܡܐ ܕܐܠܗ ܚܝܘܬܐ]

8.1 ܬܠܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܟܝܢܐ ܕܢܦܫܐ ܕܐܢܫܐ ܕܐܬܥܒܕ ܡܫܝܚܘܬܐ. ܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܥܡܐ ܕܐܠܗ ܚܝܘܬܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܥܡܐ ܕܐܠܗ ܚܝܘܬܐ.

8.2 ܘܟܕ ܐܬܐ ܕܩܘܡܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܩܕܡܘܗܝ ܐܝܟ ܕܚܕܝܢܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ[86] ܡܫܝܚܐ. ܠܐ ܢܗܘܐ ܕܢܢܬܐ: ܕܡܫܝܚܘܬܗ ܡܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ. ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ (ܘܠܐ 16 ܚ) ܘܐܝܟ ܕܢܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܥܡܐ ܕܐܠܗ ܚܝܘܬܐ: ܐܝܟ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܐܢܐ. ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ: ܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ. ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ ܕܐܠܗ

8.3 And again, in order to show the consubstantiality[88] with the Spirit, he said: "The Spirit is the one who gives life."[89] "And if the Spirit of Him who raised our Lord Jesus Christ (from the dead) dwells in you, He will also give life to your dead bodies because of His Spirit that dwells in you."[90]

8.4 And if these (deeds) belong to the whole (Trinity), why then did not the Father or the Spirit incarnated?

The Father is the Cause of all that exists. He is the Cause of the Son through birth, and the Cause of the Spirit through procession;[91] while concerning the universe, He is the Cause through creation.[92] For it was not possible (suitable) for the incarnation to become the cause of the Cause of all. Equally, it was not possible (suitable) for the effect to become a cause for the Cause. As it is not possible for the effect to become a cause, likewise it was not possible, that is, not suitable for the Father to be called the Son, especially not "the son of David and of Abraham."[93] How therefore can fatherhood be named as such if the Father, who is the source of all fatherhood, would become the Son? Or what kind of cause for every existing and created thing would there have been, if the cause itself would be under (the effect) of an effect. Therefore, since it was not suitable, it justly did not happen. This was not suitable even for the Spirit. If the name "spirit" implies the immensity of the divine nature, it was not suitable to be identified with limitation in any way. "For God is spirit."[94] Again, it was not fitting (for the Spirit) to be called the Son; instead, it was fitting for him (the Son), who is known to be begotten from eternity, and at a certain time, to be born in flesh for the salvation of humankind.

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[88] Lit. equality in essence.

[89] Jn 6:63.

[90] Cf. Rom 8:11.

[91] Moshe Bar Kepha makes a similar argument in his commentary on Luke 1:35. See Saadi, ed., *Moshe Bar Kepha's Commentary on Luke*, Fol. 11v.

[92] Creating Cause (ܥܒܕܐ ܕܒܪܝܬܐ) or Active Cause/Cause of creation.

[93] Mt 1:1.

[94] Jn 4:24.

8.3 ܗܘܝܬ ܒܗ ܡܫܬܐ ܕܡܘܬܐ ܐܘܡܬܐ: ܐܡܪ. ܘܢܡܬ ܠܗ ܘܡܫܬܐ.[95] ܐܠܐ ܢܫܬ
ܘܠܐ ܡܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܡܢܢ ܬܡܢ ܡܡܫܬ ܢܡܢܐ ܡܡܪ: ܐܝ ܠܡܢܢ ܡܡܪ
ܡܫܬܐ ܬܫܐ. ܡܢ ܢܫܬ ܠܡ ܘܢܡܢܐ ܡܡܪ:

8.4 ܐܠܐ ܡܢܢ ܡܡܬ ܘܢܢܐ ܐܢܬܘܗܝ: ܡܡܬ ܠܗ ܐܡ ܐܡ ܢܫܬ ܐܡܪܐ.

ܐܡ ܡܡܬ ܢܢܐ ܐܢܬܘܗ ܘܡܡܡ ܡܢܢ ܘܐܢܬܘܗ. ܠܡܢ ܡܡܬ
ܡܢܫܬ ܐܢܬܘܗ ܢܢܐ. ܡܡܒܘܐ ܡܡܡܡܐ. ܠܡܢܐ ܒܗ ܢܢܐ
ܡܡܡ.[96] ܘܐ ܢܢ ܡܪܝ ܡܐ ܘܢܐ ܘܡ: ܡܐܡܪܐ ܐܡܐ ܡܐ
ܢܐ. ܡܐܐ ܡܡܫ ܒܢܢܐ ܢܐ ܢܐ ܐܢ ܢܐ. ܐܡܐ ܘܐ ܡܪܝ
ܘܢܐ ܢܐ. ܡܡ ܐܐ ܡܡܫ ܡܐ ܐܡܫ ܡܐ: ܒܐ ܢܐ ܢ
ܢܐ. ܡܐ ܢ ܡ ܡ ܡ

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